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安彦良和

文藝春秋

9784160900578

雑誌 58070-57

ISBN4-16-090057-7

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文藝春秋/定価(本体848円+税)

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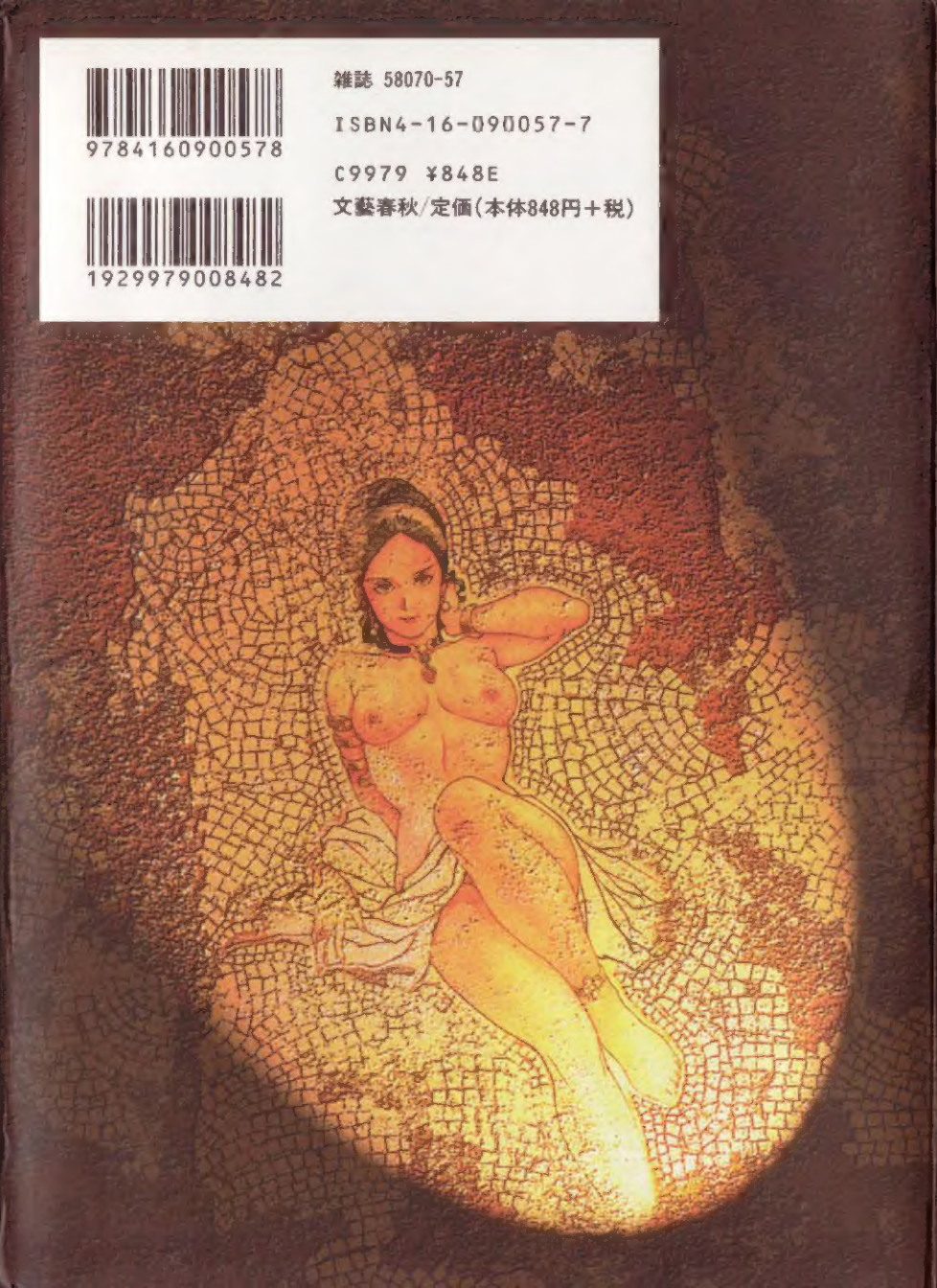
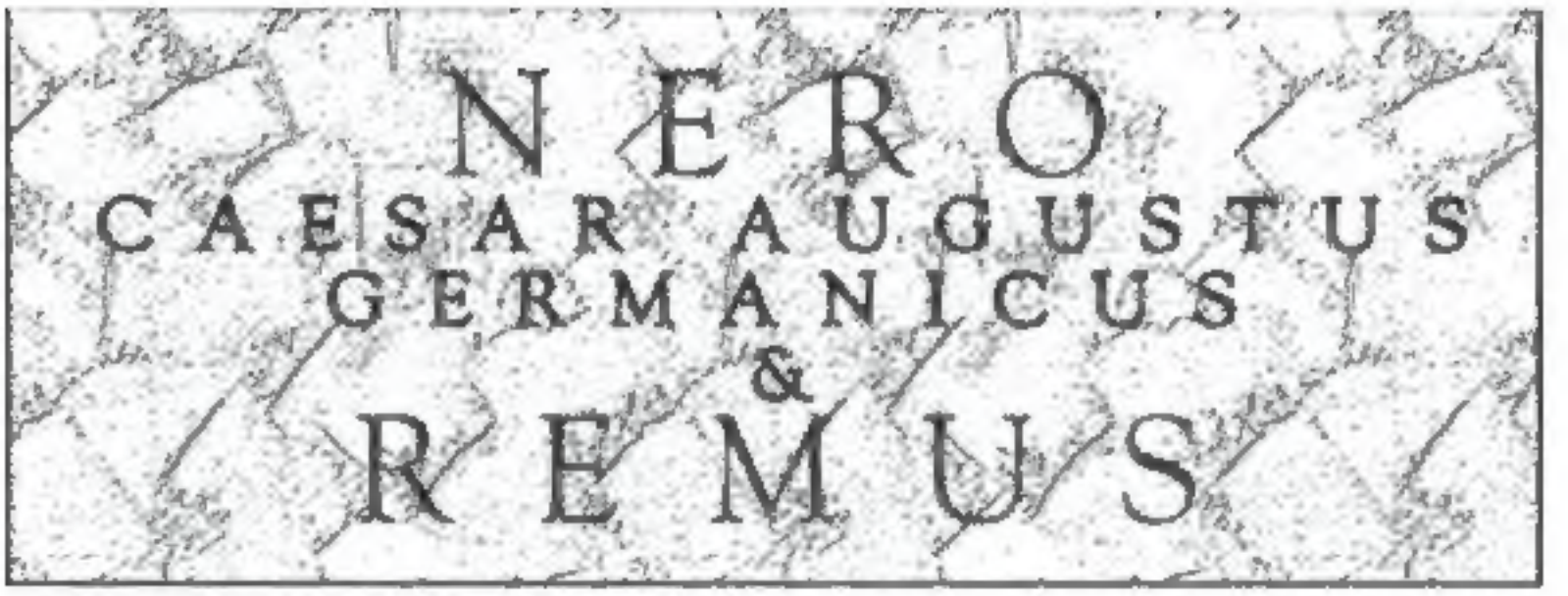


My Name is Nero Vol. 2

Yasuhiko Yoshikazu



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Translated by Hox

FOR THE GRACIOUS CAESAR HAS DECIDED TO PARDON YOU.

REJOICE,

YOU THERE,

I CAN HARDLY BELIEVE IT.

TO THINK A MERE SLAVE WHO DARED TO STRIKE THE CAESAR WOULD BE PARDONED...

THE DERANGED DOG OF GERMANIA.

Chapter 9
Remus

CUSTOM-ARILY IN ROMAN LAW,

ANY SLAVE WHO KILLS HIS OWNER IS NOT ONLY SENTENCED TO AN EXECUTION,

BUT ALSO,

THE REST OF THE OWNER'S SLAVES ARE EXECUTED AS WELL.

EVEN IN THE BEST OF CIRCUMSTANCES, A SLAVE WHO HARMED HIS OWNER WOULD BE SENTENCED TO A LIFE-TIME OF HARD LABOUR,

IN THE MINES OF CYPRUS.

HEY!

TAKE HIM DOWN AND MAKE HIM LOOK PRESENT-ABLE!

SCRUB HIM GOOD!

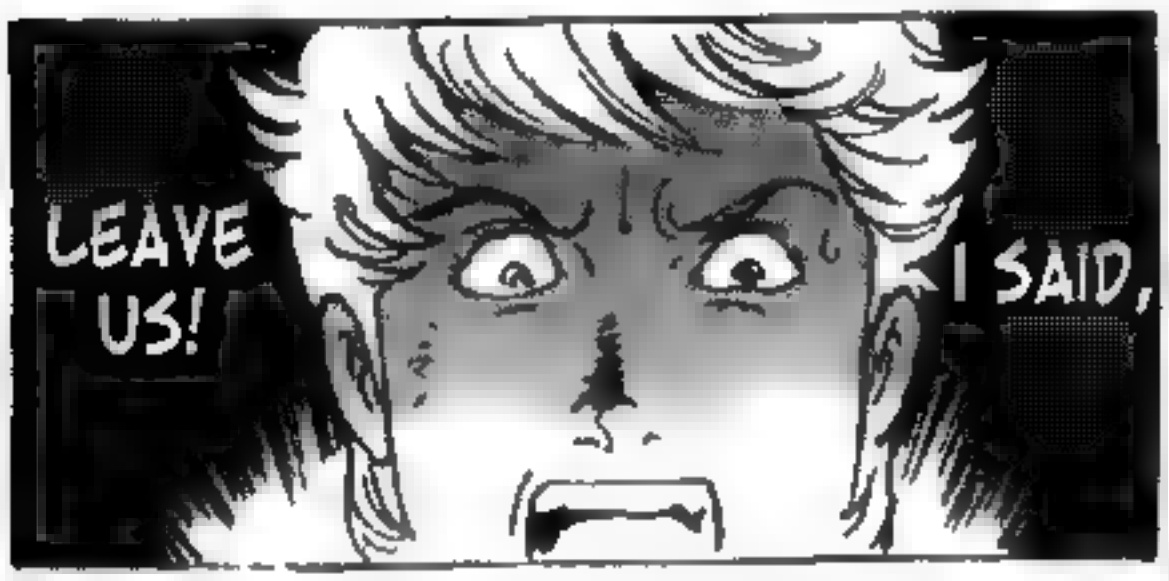
IS THAT CLEAR!?

LADY FORTUNA,

MUST BE WITH YOU.

OHH!

I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU!
HOW GOOD OF YOU TO COME, REMUS!


LEAVE US!
I SAID,

SO LEAVE!
THE REST OF YOU CAN GO.
WHA!?

A TR VIAL MATTER'

ALL YOU D D WAS ROUGH ME UP A LITTLE.

YES?

ARE WE NOT?

WE ARE, AFTER ALL, BROTHERS.

I WOULD NOT HOLD A GRUDGE,

OVER IT

A LITTLE ARGUMENT BETWEEN BROTHERS,

S NOTHING TO LINGER OVER

REMUS,

YOU DIDN'T TH.NK I WOULD SER OUSLY HARM YOU, DID YOU?

IT FELT ODDLY GOOD.

AND GRABBED MY HAIR,

WHEN YOU FORCED ME DOWN,

OHH,

REMUS.

IN FACT, IT'S THE OPPOSITE.

YOU MUST KNOW,

MEAN-WHILE, THE FORMER CAESAR CLAUDIUS WAS A GOOD STEP FATHER,

BUT MY MOTHER KILLED HIM.

THAT I HAVE NO FATHER...

MY BIRTH FATHER LEFT HOME WHEN I WAS YOUNG,

AND DIED SHORTLY AFTER HIS BODY WAS WASTED FROM DEBAUCH-ERY

A STERN LOVE THAT SCOLDS ME WITH PHYSICAL FORCE,

AND SO I HAVE NEVER KNOWN A FATHER'S LOVE.

IS NEW TO ME..

PLEASE,

REMUS.

LOVE ME.

PLEASE.

SCARED..

AND...

I HAVE NO ONE TO COUNT AS AN ALLY!

I AM ALONE!

I AM WRETCH-EDLY LONELY!

SO PLEASE!

REMUS

MY BROTHER.

WITH THAT STRONG BODY OF YOURS!
PLEASE PROTECT ME,

SHE SENT A FREEDMAN HIDING A DAGGER UNDER-NEATH HIS ROBES!

THE SUCCES-SOR TO JULIUS CAESAR!

TO DO NONE OTHER THAN MURDER THE PRINCEPS! IMPERATOR AND CAESAR OF ROME!

.....

ATTEMPTED TO KILL ME!

MY MOTHER, AGRIPPINA!

MY MOTHER, AGRIPPINA, DESPITE BEING A WOMAN, SHOWED AN INSATIABLE DESIRE TO MEDDLE IN POLITICS!

SHE CONSPIRED TO HAVE THE WHOLE OF THE EMPIRE AT HER FINGER-TIPS!

JUST AS SHE ARRANGED THE SENATE TO HOLD MEETINGS AT THE IMPERIAL PALACE,

NO RULE WAS TOO SACRED TO BEND FOR HER!

THE SENATE'S POWER AND AUTHORITY WAS-

WAS...

WAS...

UMM.

THE USURPATION OF SENATE'S AUTHORITY IS THE MOST CRUCIAL PART OF THE SPEECH!

UNACCEPTABLE!

YOU WILL NOT WIN THE SENATE'S SYMPATHY!

IF YOU STUMBLE THERE,

.....

AAAGHHHH!

NERO WAS INDEED FRIGHTENED...

HE WAS AWAKENED BY NIGHTMARES, LIKELY ABOUT AGRIPPINA'S VENGEFUL SPIRIT.

NEARLY EVERY NIGHT.

ON THIS RETURN TRIP, HE WAS WRACKED WITH NERVOUS WORRY,

OF HOW THE ROMAN CITIZENS WOULD RESPOND TO A MAN GUILTY OF MATRICIDE.

HE DELAYED HIS RETURN TO ROME FROM HIS VILLA FOR SOME TIME,

BUT,

HE EVENTUALLY DECIDED TO RETURN AT LAST

AS THE THRONE AT ROME COULD NOT BE LEFT EMPTY FOR TOO LONG,

DESPITE BEING A WOMAN, SHOWED AN INSATIABLE DESIRE TO MEDDLE IN POLITICS!

MY MOTHER, AGRIPPINA,

SHE CONSPIRED TO HAVE THE WHOLE OF THE EMPIRE AT HER FINGERTIPS!

THIS POWER-HUNGRY WOMAN WITH NO MERIT OF HER OWN EXPLOITED HER FAMILIAL CONNECTION TO GERMANICUS,

FOR HER, THE SENATE'S POWER AND AUTHORITY WAS SIMPLY AN OBSTACLE TO CRUSH!

JUST AS SHE ARRANGED THE SENATE TO HOLD MEETINGS AT THE IMPERIAL PALACE, NO RULE WAS TOO SACRED TO BEND FOR HER!

AND DARE TO MONOPOLIZE ITS POWER!

TO WORM HER WAY TO THE IMPERIAL THRONE,

SHE CAME TO SEE EVEN ME, HER OWN BLOOD-RELATED SON, AS ANOTHER HINDRANCE...

WHEN I RESISTED HER UNLAWFUL ENCROACHMENT,

THE PAIN OF HAVING HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO KILL MY OWN MOTHER,

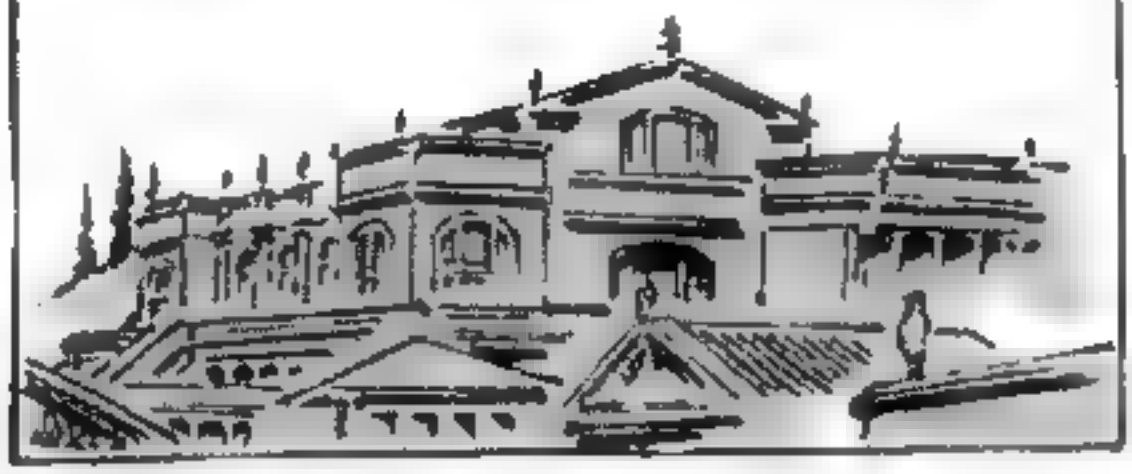
EVEN IF IT WERE FOR THE GOOD OF THE EMPIRE AND ITS CITIZENS!

TRY TO IMAGINE THE SCALE OF MY PAIN!

HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF THE SENATE!

FOR THE MOMENT, ROME WAS AT PEACE.

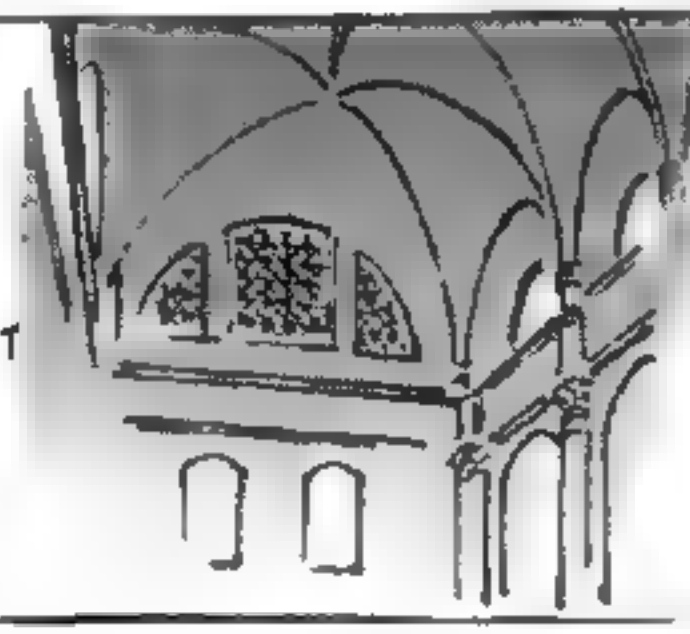
WHILE I DON'T BELIEVE THE SENATORS WERE ENTIRELY CONVINCED BY NERO'S VERSION OF EVENTS,



WHETHER OR NOT NERO REALLY HAD KILLED HIS MOTHER IN SELF-DEFENSE,

FOR THE REGULAR CITIZENS OF ROME, THE MATTER WAS PROBABLY OF NO REAL SIGNIFICANCE.

THEY WERE CONTENT



AS LONG AS THEY HAD BREAD, CIRCUSES, AND BATHS,

FOR HE MANAGED TO CALM DOWN AT LAST AND RELAX...

NERO SURELY THOUGHT THE SAME ABOUT THE MASSES,

NERO DELIVERED AN UNUSUALLY IMPASSIONED SPEECH BEFORE THE SENATE, OR SO I HEARD.

REMUS!

OVER HERE, REMUS!

AM I RIGHT!?

THAT MUST MEAN YOU'RE SKILLED AT HANDLING HORSES,

SINCE YOU'RE A GERMANUS,

REMUS,

A CHARIOT?

HOW TO DRIVE A CHARIOT!

IF SO, I WANT YOU TO TEACH ME,

I'VE DECIDED TO COMPETE AND WIN THE RACE PERSONALLY!

THERE WILL BE A CHARIOT-RACE AT THE CAMPUS MARTIUS!

THAT'S RIGHT!

'QUINQUENNIAL, DESPITE MEANING EVERY 5 YEARS IN MODERN-ENGLISH, MEANT EVERY 4 YEARS FOR THE ROMANS AS THEY COUNTED INCLUSIVELY

IT WILL BE CALLED THE NERON A!

A QUIN-QUENN AL EVENT!

EVERY BIT AS GREAT AS THE GREEK OLYMPICS!

I'M PLANNING ON HOSTING A FESTIVAL OF GAMES,

IT WON'T BE JUST CHARIOT-RACING!

A HEALTHY HEART AND M ND MUST ACCOMPANY A HEALTHY BODY! THE NERON A WILL HELP FOSTER THEM!

THESE GAMES WON'T BE A VIOLENT GORE-FEST! THE PEOPLE WILL COME TO APPRECIATE HIGH-CULTURE LIKE THE GREEKS!

IT'LL DELIGHT THE CITIZENS!

BEST OF ALL,

OHH, THANK YOU!

SO YOU'LL [REALLY] TEACH ME?

TH S IS WHY I LOVE YOU SO!

MY BELOVED REMUS!

AND EQUES-TRIANISM!
PERFORM-ANCES OF ART, GYMNASTICS,
CAN YOU IMAG NE A MORE THRILLING FESTIVAL!?
IT'LL BE GREAT!
I'LL MAKE EVEN THE FAT AND OUT-OF-SHAPE SENATORS COMPETE!

ONE CANNOT GOVERN WELL WITHOUT ALSO KNOWING HOW TO WIND DOWN EVERY NOW AND THEN,
RIGHT!?
YOU THINK SO TOO, DON'T YOU, REMUS!?

THE NERONIA WAS HELD WITH GREAT FANFARE.

AND TOOK FIRST PLACE.

NERO COMPETED IN THE CHARIOT RACE.

AS A MULTI-TALENTED AND BELOVED EMPEROR.

SURELY HE THOUGHT OF HIMSELF,

STILL, NERO WAS EUPHORIC.

THAT BEING SAID, HIS OPPONENTS WERE ALL NOVICES,

AND THEY ALSO LIKELY LET NERO WIN

THE SUCCESS OF THE NERONIA,

QUICKLY MADE NERO FORGET ALL ABOUT THE UNPLEASANT EVENTS OF THE PREVIOUS YEAR.

AND HE GREW MORE AND MORE CORPULENT.

BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, I BEGAN TO DETECT A CHANGE WITHIN NERO.

WAS BEGINNING TO TAKE A TOLL ON HIS BODY,

THE EXCESSIVE DRINKING AND PLAYING HE SUBJECTED HIMSELF TO DAY AFTER DAY,

BUT FIRST, ALLOW ME TO GO BACK IN TIME A BIT.

THIS EVENT HAPPENED DURING THE FIRST NERONIA.

I HAD GONE INTO TOWN,

WITH A FEW COMPANIONS FROM NERO'S LUDUS GLADIATORIUS..

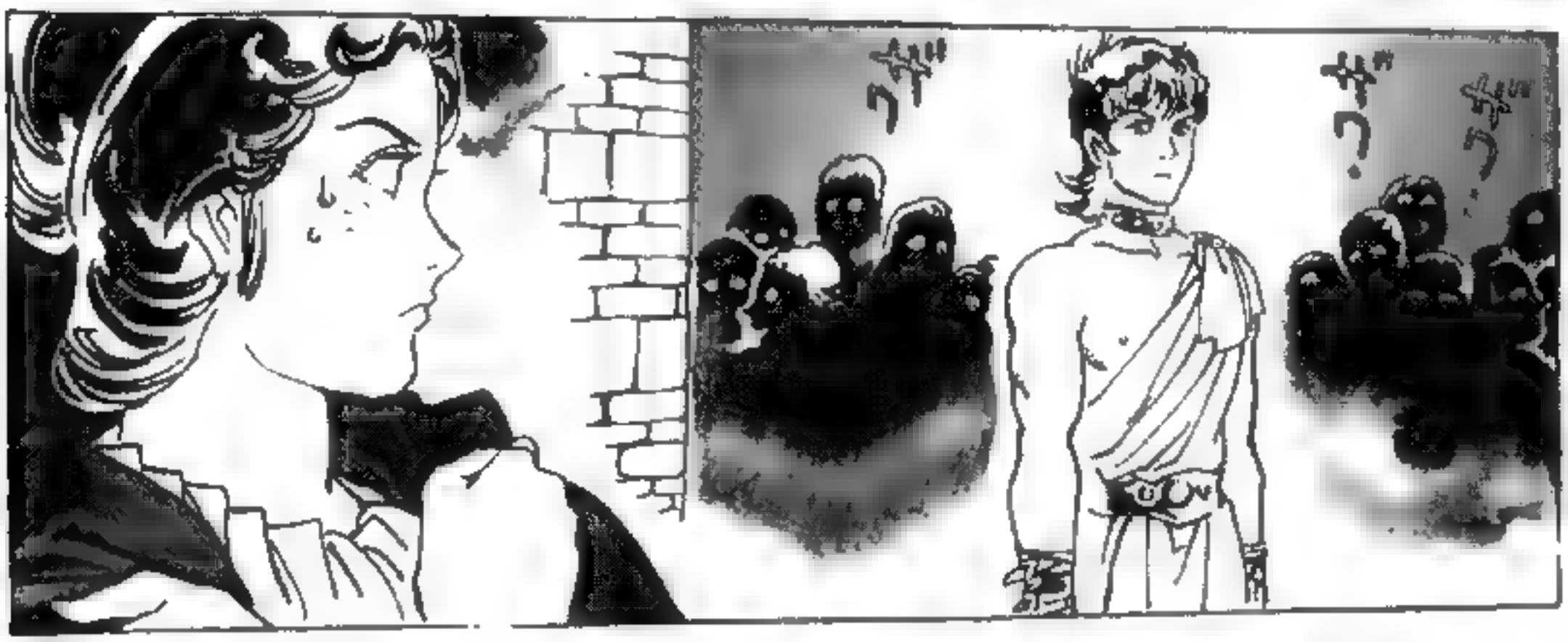
?
HEY
REMUS?
ACTING LIKE SHE'S TOO GOOD FOR US...
WHAT'S WITH THIS GIRL?
TAKE IT OFF!
WHAT ARE YOU, JEWISH?
WHAT'S WITH THE PRUDISH GETUP?
JUST GIVE IN.
IF YOU KEEP STRUG-GLING, YOU MIGHT GET HURT
C'MON, WHAT'S WRONG WITH A LITTLE PAT?
LET ME COP A FEEL.
HA, THAT'S A NICE CHEST YOU HAD HIDDEN UNDER-NEATH.
HM?

WHO...

THE HELL ARE YOU?

!オロ十

WE WON'T FORGET ABOUT THIS!
DAMN IT!



HEY!
WAIT!

HOW ABOUT A WORD OF THANKS AT LEAST!?

I JUST SAVED YOU!

IS A FOUL BEING BENEATH EVEN A WILD BEAST!

A MAN WHO EMBRACES ANOTHER MAN IN LOVE,

DON'T FOLLOW ME!

WHA?

NO,

THAT WAS..

.....

AND BE ASHAMED AS A HUMAN!

KNOW THY SINS,

EVEN IF YOU ARE OF LOW BIRTH LIKE ME, AND EVEN IF THAT OTHER MAN IS NERO H MSELF, SO THAT YOU ARE IN NO POSIT ON TO REFUSE...

すすすす

THAT IS OF NO CONCERN'

WHERE ARE YOU GOING!?

IF YOU STROLL THROUGH THESE DARK ALLEYS ALONE,

YOU'LL BE PREYED UPON AGA N!

NO CONCERN?

I DOUBT THAT...

*ANCIENT ROME WAS DIVIDED INTO 14 REGIONS (REGIO)

WAS THE JEWISH QUARTER, IF I REMEMBER RIGHT...

BEYOND THE TIBER RIVER IN REGIO XIV...

I APOLOGIZE ABOUT MY EARLIER RUDE REMARKS.

FORGIVE ME.

YOU'RE VERY KIND, AREN'T YOU,

THANK YOU.

TO HAVE ESCORTED ME SAFELY ALL THE WAY OUT HERE...

AS YOU SEEM TO BE A MAN OF PURE HEART, I'M SURE YOU WILL BE FASCINATED WITH WHAT HE HAS TO SAY.

AN INCREDIBLE MAN WILL GIVE HIS TEACHINGS THERE.

WOULD YOU CARE TO JOIN OUR CONGREGATION TODAY?

EVEN AT THE COST OF GREAT PERSONAL RISK

HE HAS COME FROM DISTANT LANDS TO GIVE US GUIDANCE,

INCREDIBLE, YOU SAY?

HE IS A TEACHER OF VIRTUES.

HE HAS COME TO SET US FREE FROM A LIFE OF WANDERING AND S N.

AH,

THIS IS IT.

MAY BE CLEANSED THROUGH HIS TEACH-INGS

EVEN YOUR SINS,

!?

MY SINS?

FINE.

COME IN.

ANOTHER WANDERER FROM DISTANT LANDS...

WELL HE'S CERTAINLY NO ROMAN.

A GLADIATOR?

WHO'S THE OTHER ONE WITH YOU?

IS THAT YOU, ACTE?

HIS SERMON'S ALREADY BEGUN.

SHH!

YES.

IS...

THAT MAN,

PAULUS

THE APOSTLE PAULUS.

THE MAN WHOM GOD'S CHILD JESUS CHRIST SAW FIT TO MAKE HIS SERVANT,

SEE THEN THAT YE WALK CIRCUMSPECTLY, NOT AS FOOLS, BUT AS WISE, REDEEMING THE TIME, BECAUSE THE DAYS ARE EVIL.

AWAKE THOU THAT SLEEPEST, AND ARISE FROM THE DEAD, AND CHRIST SHALL GIVE THEE LIGHT.

BUT UNDERSTANDING WHAT THE WILL OF THE LORD IS.

WHEREFORE BE YE NOT UNWISE,

BUT BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT.

AND BE NOT DRUNK WITH WINE, WHEREIN IS EXCESS,

GOD'S CHILD?

AGAINST THE RULERS OF THE DARKNESS OF THIS WORLD, AGAINST SPIRITUAL WICKEDNESS IN HIGH PLACES.

PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD, THAT YE MAY BE ABLE TO STAND AGAINST THE WILES OF THE DEVIL.

FOR WE WRESTLE NOT AGAINST FLESH AND BLOOD, BUT AGAINST PRINCIPALITIES, AGAINST POWERS,

WHEREFORE TAKE UNTO YOU THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD, THAT YE MAY BE ABLE TO WITHSTAND IN THE EVIL DAY,

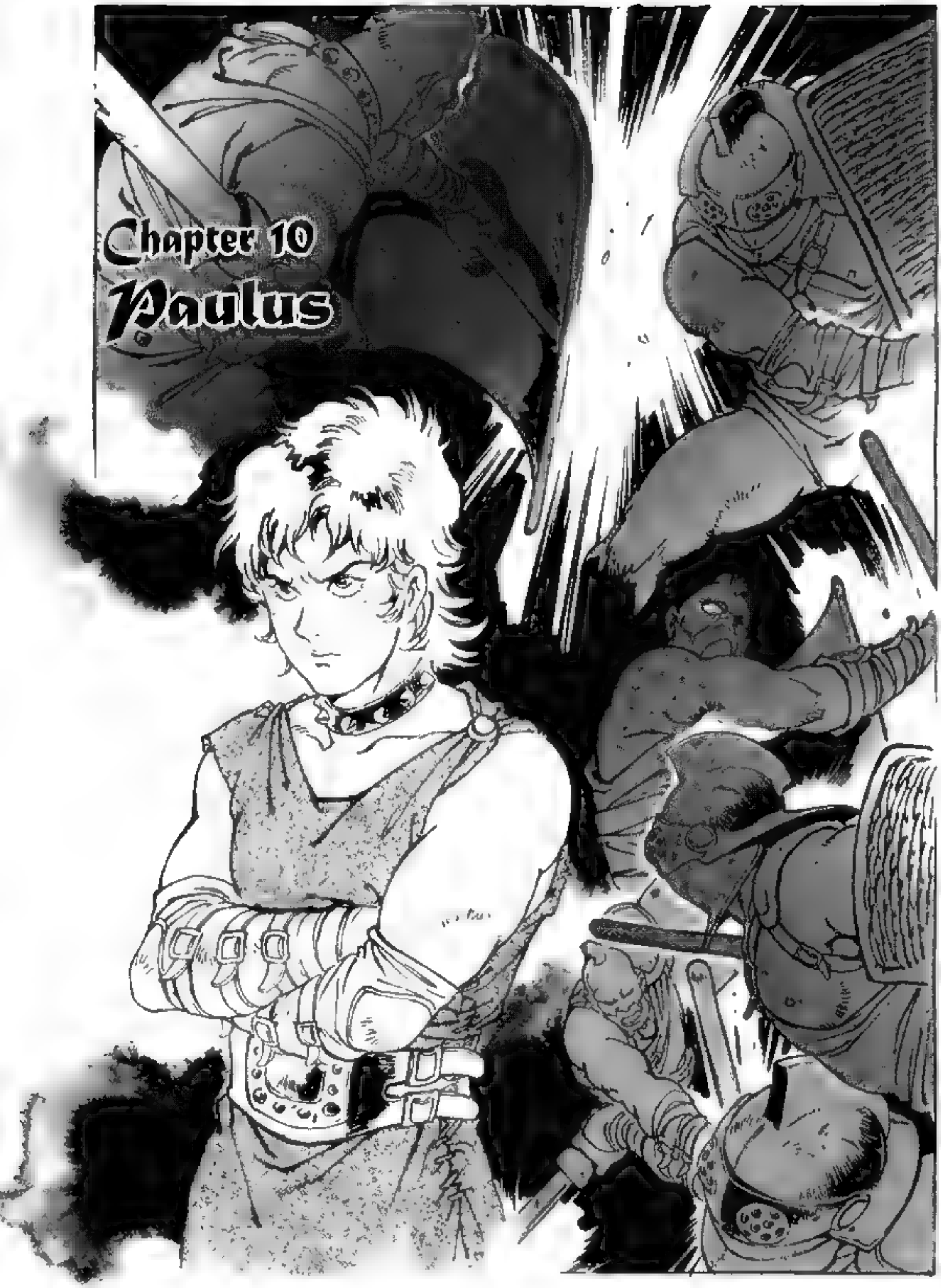
AND HAVING DONE ALL, TO STAND!

JESUS...

CHRIST...?

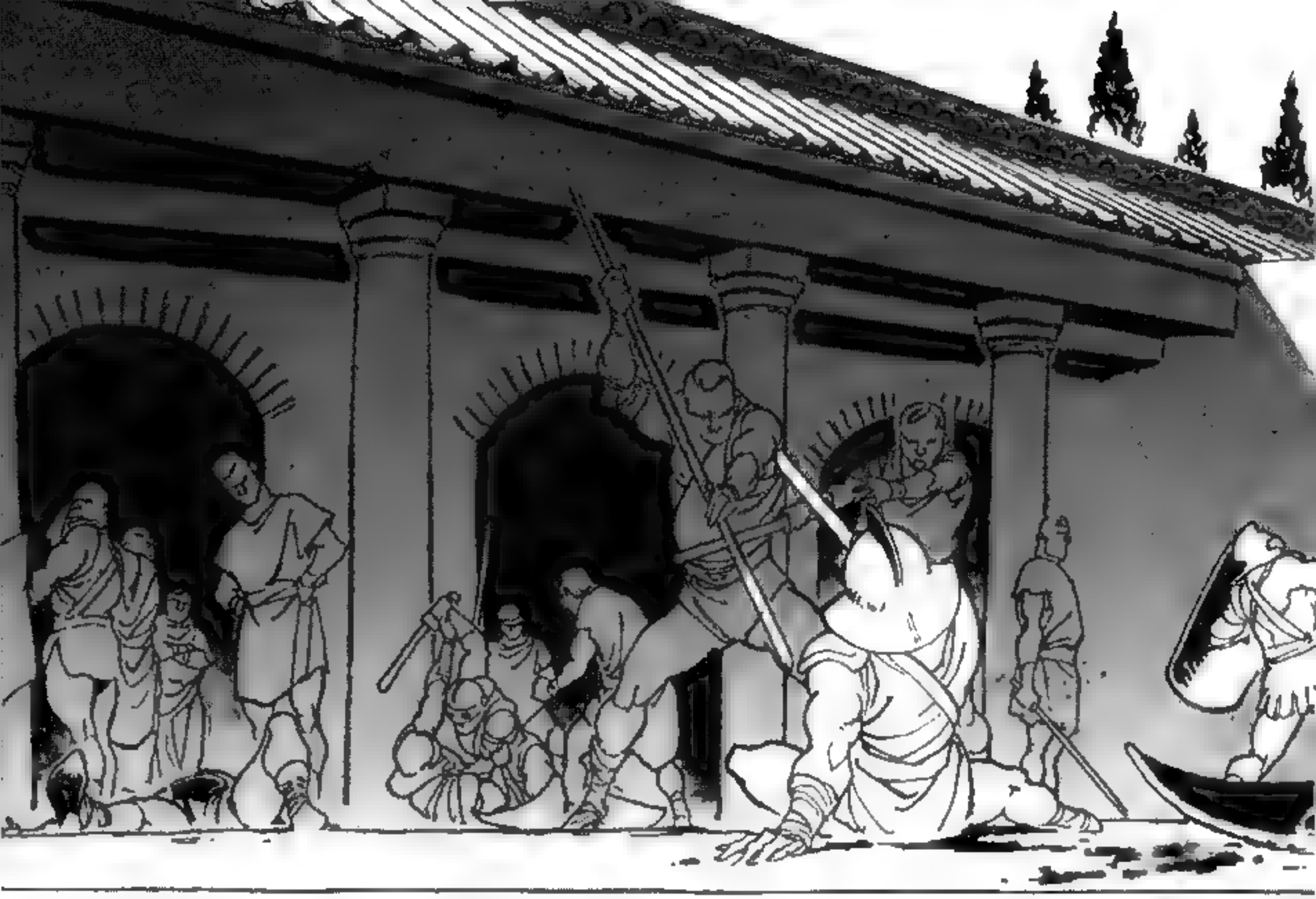
WHAT ON EARTH IS HE TALKING ABOUT!?

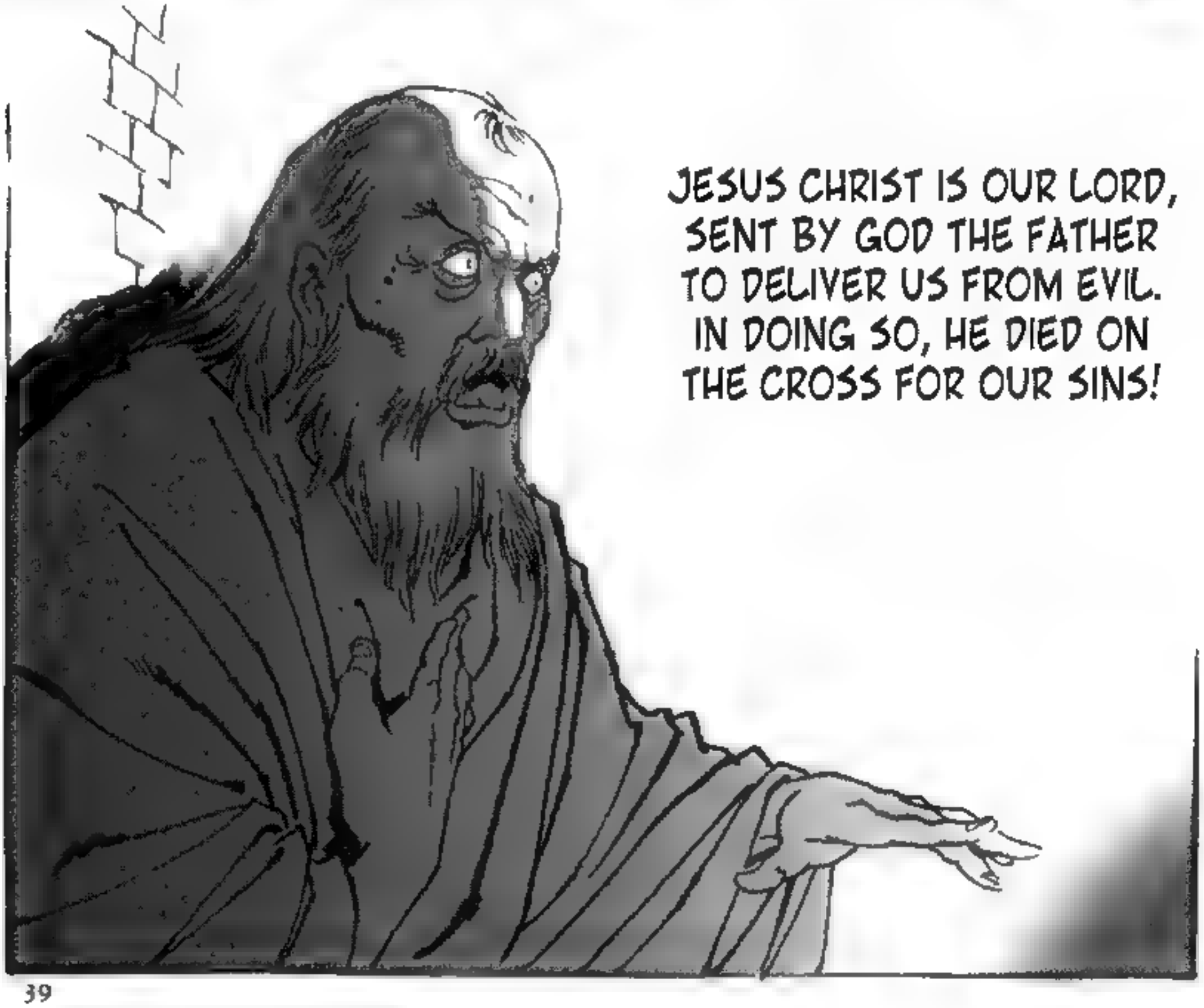
"TRANSLATION OF PAUL'S LINES IN PAGES 35 AND 36 TAKEN FROM KJV EPHESUS 5


Chapter 10
Paulus

BELIEVE IN HIS RESUR-RECTION!

JESUS CHRIST WAS RESURRECTED THREE DAYS AFTER HIS CRUCIFIXION!




JESUS CHRIST IS OUR LORD,
SENT BY GOD THE FATHER
TO DELIVER US FROM EVIL.
IN DOING SO, HE DIED ON
THE CROSS FOR OUR SINS!

THROUGH CHRIST'S SACRIFICE AND GOD'S GRACE, IT IS POSSIBLE FOR ALL OF US TO HAVE OUR SINS BE FORGIVEN.

ALTHOUGH WE HUMANS ARE ALL SINNERS AND ORDINARILY UNABLE TO RECEIVE THE GLORY OF GOD,

GOD WILL SAVE ANYONE WHO BELIEVES IN JESUS CHRIST. THERE WILL BE NO DISCRIMINATION.

.....

BLESS THOSE WHO CURSE YOU. DO NOT CURSE THEM BACK IN RETURN.

LOVE YOUR BROTHERS AND RESPECT ONE ANOTHER SINCERELY.

EVIL MUST NOT BE REPAID WITH EVIL.

YOU MUST BEAR A HEART OF GOODWILL IN FRONT OF ALL.

TRAIN SERIOUSLY, WILL YA!?

WHAT'RE YOU SPACING OUT FOR!?

REMUS!

.....

AWW, AIN'T THAT CUTE. LITTLE REMUS WEMUS DREAMING AWAY...

ARE YOU?

HAVING A SWEET DAYDREAM,

TO HIM YESTERDAY

NERO MUST HAVE SHARED HIS HOT LOVE,

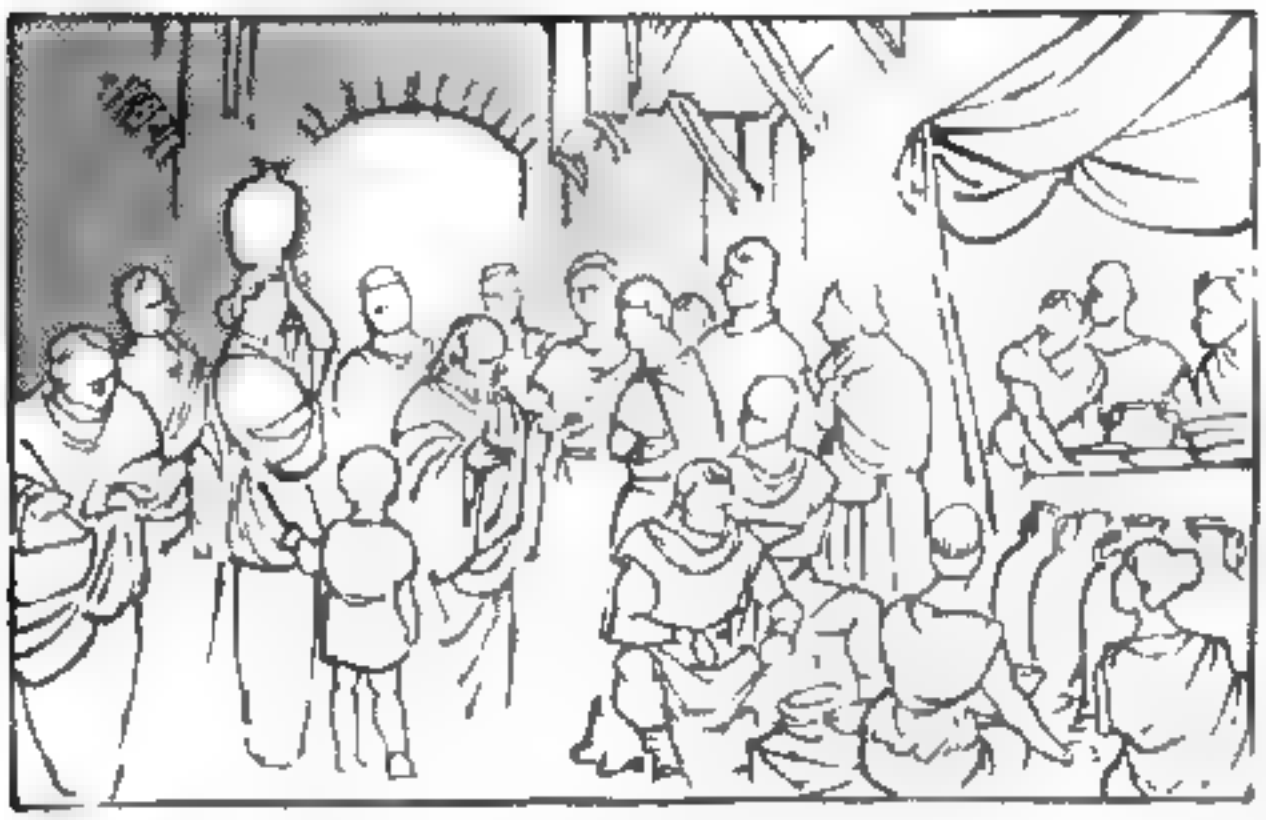
.....

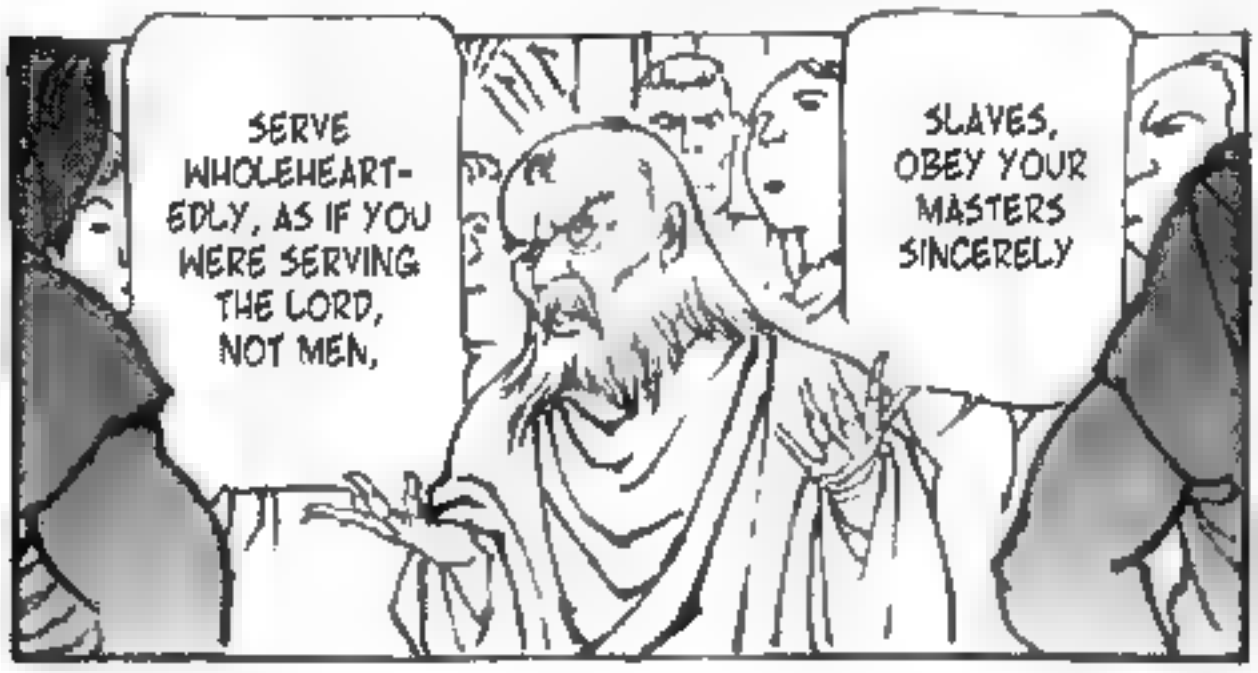
HMPH!

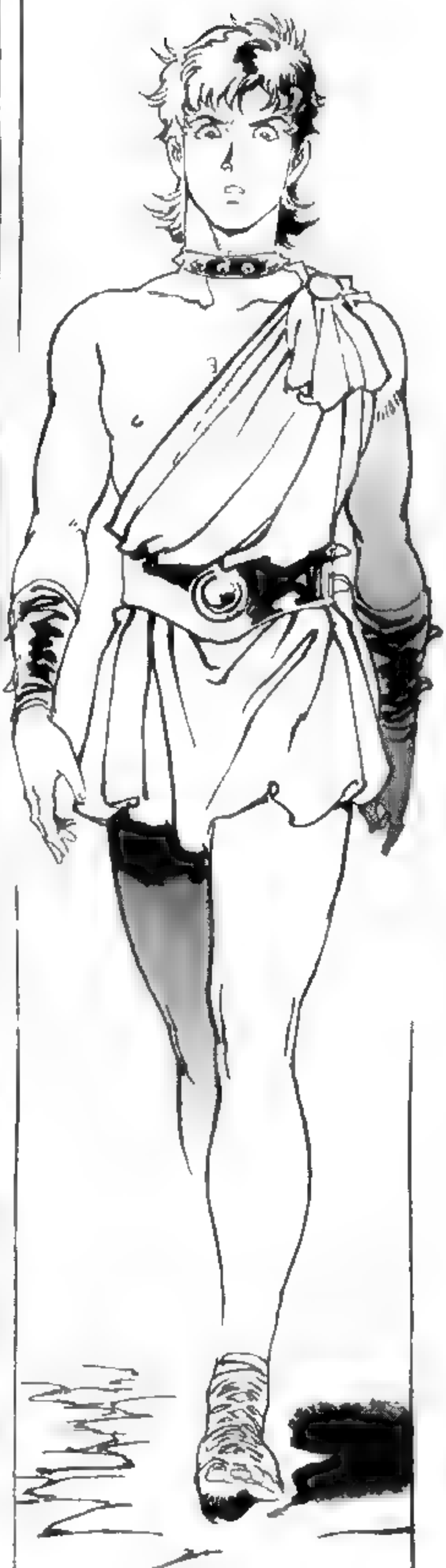
WHEN YOU'RE STILL HALF-ASLEEP IN DREAM-LAND!

DON'T GO THINKING YOU CAN AVOID INJURY,

WHAT, YOU'RE NOT GONNA USE A SHIELD!?







 *TAKEN FROM NIV EPHESIANS 6

PREACH TO PEOPLE OTHER THAN JEWS?

YOU

ARE YOU NOT?

AH... YOU'RE THE GLADIATOR THAT CAME WITH ACTE TO THE CONGREGATION LAST NIGHT,

WHAT A YOUTHFUL, VIGOROUS BODY YOU POSSESS...

SURELY, IT MUST BE COVETED BY THOSE ROMANS AND GREEKS WHO HAVE A STRONG INCLINATION FOR LUST...

ふふふ...

THEY ARE TO BE SPREAD TO JEWS AND GENTILES ALIKE.

THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS CHRIST ARE TOO SACRED TO BE MONOPOLIZED BY JEWS ALONE.

FOR THIS, I AM CALLED A HERETIC,

BY SOME JEWS.

AMONG THE APOSTLES OF JESUS, IT IS I WHO HOLD MOST FIERCELY ONTO THIS VIEW.

HAVE YOU EVER HEARD THE STORY OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH?

I SUPPOSE I SHOULD NOT EXPECT A GERMANUS LIKE YOU TO HAVE HEARD SUCH OLD TALES OF MY PEOPLE..

OR THE STORY OF HOW ADAM AND EVE WERE BANISHED FROM THE GARDEN OF EDEN AFTER TASTING THE FORBIDDEN FRUIT?

IT IS THIS NATURE OF HUMANS WHICH LEADS TO INJUSTICE, SUFFERING,

ADAM AND THE PEOPLE OF SODOM AND GOMORROAH I SPEAK OF ARE NO SPECIAL PEOPLE.

AND INCESSANT HORRID CONFLICT IN THIS WORLD

THEY ARE SIMPLY ANOTHER IN THE LONG LINE OF EXAMPLES THAT PROVE HUMAN WEAKNESS IN FRONT OF EARTHLY DESIRES.

IF SO,

THEN THAT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH ME.

THE SIN COMITTED BY PEOPLE LONG AGO?

IS THE SIN YOU SPEAK OF ..

NAY!

HOW WRONG YOU ARE!

AND I'VE NEVER HEARD OF THIS ADAM PERSON.

I DISLIKE SLEEPING WITH MEN,

HM...

AND ENSLAVING ME AND MY PEOPLE.

I'VE SWORN TO HAVE MY REVENGE ONE DAY

I LOATHE THE MAN RESPONSIBLE FOR DESTROYING MY TRIBE,

BUT YOU SAY IT IS WRONG TO CURSE YOUR ENEMIES?

I CAN SYMPATHIZE WITH YOUR LECTURE WHEN IT COMES TO DOING GOOD AND BROTHERLY LOVE,

I CANNOT STAND FOR THAT

BUT THE JUSTICE OF GOD IS ONE!

SO REPENT YOUR SINS AND AWAIT THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT WHILE BELIEVING IN JESUS CHRIST AS LORD

AND TO RECEIVE GOD'S JUSTICE IS ACHIEVED ONLY THROUGH FAITH IN GOD

WILL YOUR ENEMIES NOT SIMPLY COME TO PAY YOU BACK IN TIME?

WHAT WILL COME OF REVENGE?

FOR 1000 PEOPLE, THERE ARE 1000 DIFFERENT VIEWS ON JUSTICE.

HOWEVER, THE JEWISH LEGALISTS HAVE COME TO FORGET THE HOLY NATURE BACKING THESE LAWS,

AND THAT GOD GAVE HIS LAWS TO THE JEWISH PEOPLE.

AND HAVE TURNED GOD'S SACRED TEACHINGS INTO A MUNDANE PILE OF LAWS TO BE OBEYED WITHOUT REAL THOUGHT..

THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD WHO CREATED ALL THINGS IN EXISTENCE!

YOU SAY THE JUSTICE OF GOD IS ONE. BUT THERE IS MORE THAN ONE GOD THE GODS OF MY PEOPLE, ROMAN GODS, AND SO FORTH...

IS THE GOD YOU SPEAK OF STRONG ENOUGH TO JUDGE THE ROMANS?

OH?

SO YOU ACTUALLY SAW HIM?

HIS RESURRECTION, OF COURSE!

HMPH!

AND JUST WHERE DO YOU GET THE CONVICTION,

THAT JESUS WAS TRULY SON OF GOD?

AND SHOWED US HUMANS THE TRUE PATH TO GOD

JESUS, SON OF GOD, FOUGHT AGAINST THE EMPTY TEACHINGS OF THE LEGALISTS,

I DID!

INDEED...

HOWEVER, ONE DAY,

WHILE ON THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS

I TIED THEM UP AND DELIVERED SEVERE AND CRUEL PUNISHMENTS...

MOREVER, I ZEALOUSLY PERSECUTED JEWISH HERETICS WHO DARED TO BELIEVE IN JESUS AS MESSIAH.

.....

AS I AM NOT ONE OF JESUS' ORIGINAL APOSTLES,

I DID NOT DIRECTLY SEE HIS RESURRECTION AFTER CRUCIFIXION...

AND I BECAME UNABLE TO SEE.

I WAS SUDDENLY STRUCK BY A STRONG LIGHT,

SAUL, SAUL...

A VOICE CALLING OUT TO ME FROM SOMEPLACE...

IT WAS THEN THAT I HEARD,

*SAUL IS PAULUS' HEBREW NAME

WHY DO YOU PERSECUTE ME...?

"WHO ARE YOU, LORD?"

AS I WAS UNABLE TO SEE ANYTHING,

I SIMPLY TURNED TOWARDS THE VOICE AND ASKED,

AND I NEITHER ATE NOR DRANK.

FOR THREE DAYS AFTER, I WAS BLIND.

YES.

THAT'S YOUR EXPERIENCE OF MEETING THE RESURRECTED JESUS?

AND THE VOICE REPLIED TO ME.

"I AM JESUS, WHOM YOU ARE PERSECUTING."

"NOW GET UP AND GO INTO THE CITY, AND YOU WILL BE TOLD WHAT YOU MUST DO."

GLADIATOR.

.....

YOU COULD'VE BEEN JUST STRUCK BY LIGHTNING AND HALLUCINATED.

SO TO PUT IT BLUNTLY, YOU D DN'T "ACTUALLY" SEE ANYTHING.

*LINES TAKEN FROM NIV ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 9

WHILE YOUR SKEPTICISM IS UNDERSTANDABLE,

I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT GOD HAS CHOSEN ME FOR HIS MISSION.

I CANNOT COMMAND GOD TO PROVE HIMSELF.

THAT EVEN A FORMER SINNER LIKE ME HAS BEEN ABLE TO ATTRACT A FOLLOWING AND SHOW THE PEOPLE THE TRUE PATH TO GOD.

IT IS DUE TO HIS GRACE,

AHEM!

もじ もじ…

HE IS A LOYAL SERVANT OF GOD WHO ALWAYS ACCOMPANIES ME.

LUKE THE PHYSICIAN.

LET ME INTRODUCE TO YOU,

THOUGH I CANNOT SAY WHEN EXACTLY IT WILL ARRIVE.

THE DAY OF JUDGMENT IS NEAR,

SO THERE ARE ALWAYS SOLDIERS KEEPING A CLOSE WATCH TO SEE THAT I DO NOT ESCAPE.

I AM CURRENTLY UNDER ARREST,

THE SOLDIERS OVER THERE ARE KEEPING WATCH ON ME.

AS LONG AS I REMAIN HERE IN ROME, I AM SAFE FOR THE TIME BEING. BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY,

THERE IS NOWHERE ELSE I WOULD RATHER BE,

FOR THERE ARE MANY TASKS I MUST DEVOTE TO HERE IN ROME...

MY RESIDENCE IS FIXED AS PER THE CAESAR'S ORDERS,

BUT I HAVE NO COMPLAINTS ABOUT LIFE UNDER HOUSE ARREST.

AS I MENTIONED BEFORE, THERE ARE THOSE JEWS WHO VIEW ME AS A HERETIC AND WOULD GLADLY KILL ME IF THEY SAW AN OPENING.

TO PREACH TO NERO!?

DO YOU PLAN,

SO YOU ARE NERO'S PERSONAL GLADIATOR!?

OHH!?

THANK YOU, GOD,

FOR GUID NG ME YET AGAIN!

SPLENDID!

CAESAR NERO IS A MAN OF MANY VICES.

OF COURSE.

TO CONVERT HIM TO A SINCERE AND GOD-FEARING MAN WOULD BE MY GREATEST MISSION!

NO!

YOU MUSTN'T!

THEN BEAR MY CHILD, POPPAEA!

SO?

BECAUSE I WOULD BECOME PREGNANT

TODAY IS RISKY...

WHY NOT?

OHHHH! NEROOO!

I WOULD GLADLY BEAR YOUR CHILD...

IF ONLY I HAD SOME ASSUR-ANCE THAT SUCH A CHILD WILL BECOME CAESAR,

HOW MUCH LONGER MUST I ENDURE,

WON'T YOU PLEASE MARRY ME AT LAST!?

UNTIL I CAN BE YOUR LAWFULLY WEDDED WIFE!?

IF I DIVORCE HER NOW, THE PUBLIC MIGHT...

J... JUST A LITTLE LONGER.

I CANNOT ENDURE IT ANY LONGER!

NO! I'VE ALREADY WAITED AND WAITED!

OF WHAT CONCERN ARE THE OPINIONS OF THE MASSES,

IN LIGHT OF YOUR PARAMOUNT POWER AND AUTHORITY?

.....

FOR THIS, A CAESAR MUST HAVE, ABOVE ALL, AN HEIR.

ALL ROME DESIRES IS CONTINUED PROSPERITY

AND OCTAVIA,

CANNOT GIVE YOU THAT!

.....

OHHH!

HOW CAN THIS BE!?

WAS NERO NOT THE ADOPTED SON WHO NEEDED TO MARRY INTO CLAUDIUS' LINE FOR LEGITIMACY?

ACTE,

THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND SERVICE ALL THESE YEARS.

HOW CAN SUCH INJUSTICE BE PERMITTED!?

AND YET THE ADOPTED SON NOW DARES TO CUT TIES WITH THE DAUGHTER OF CLAUDIUS' BLOOD!

IT'S FINE, GIRLS.

WITH THIS, I CAN FINALLY BECOME AN ORDINARY WOMAN.

CAESAR NERO!

YOU MUST NOT DIVORCE HER!

NO,

YOU'VE DONE WELL SERVING OCTAVIA ALL THESE YEARS, BUT THAT WON'T BE NECESSARY ANY LONGER

ACTE?

HER ABSENCE WILL SORELY BE MISSED BY ALL!

SO PLEASE-

OCTAVIA IS OF NOBLE BIRTH AND SHE HAS LIVED HERE IN THE PALACE ALL HER LIFE AS PART OF HER BIRTH RIGHT!

ACTE!

KNOW YOUR PLACE.

YOU ARE QUITE A NOSY WOMAN.

I MUST SAY,

BUT I FIRMLY BELIEVE I AM NOT IN THE WRONG HERE!

FORGIVE ME FOR MY BLUNT REMARKS, POPPAEA,

IS NOT SOME-THING A FREED-WOMAN LIKE YOU CAN MEDDLE IN!

THE CAESAR'S PERSONAL MATTER,

JUST LISTEN!

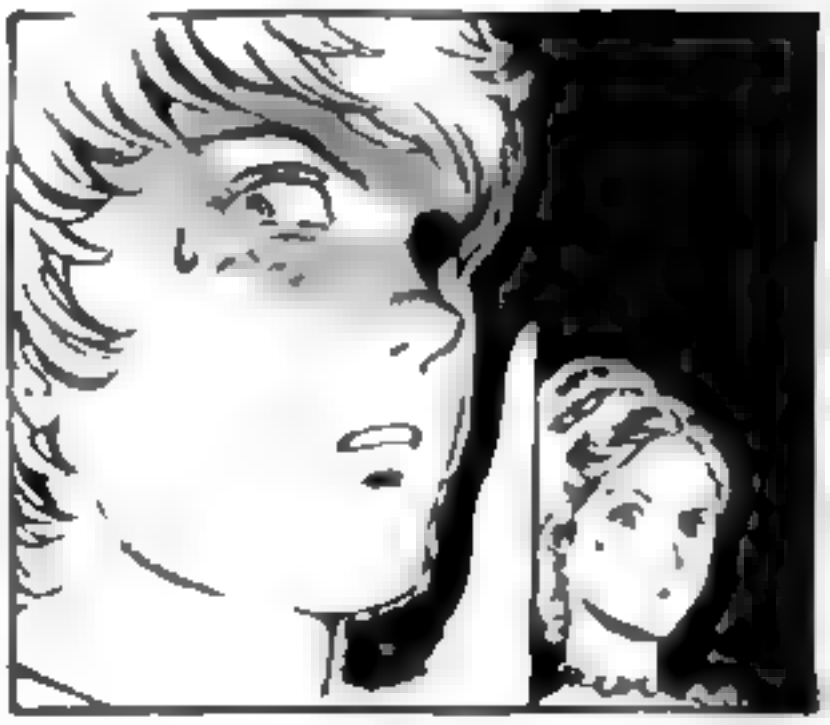
TO THEIR VOICES OUTSIDE!

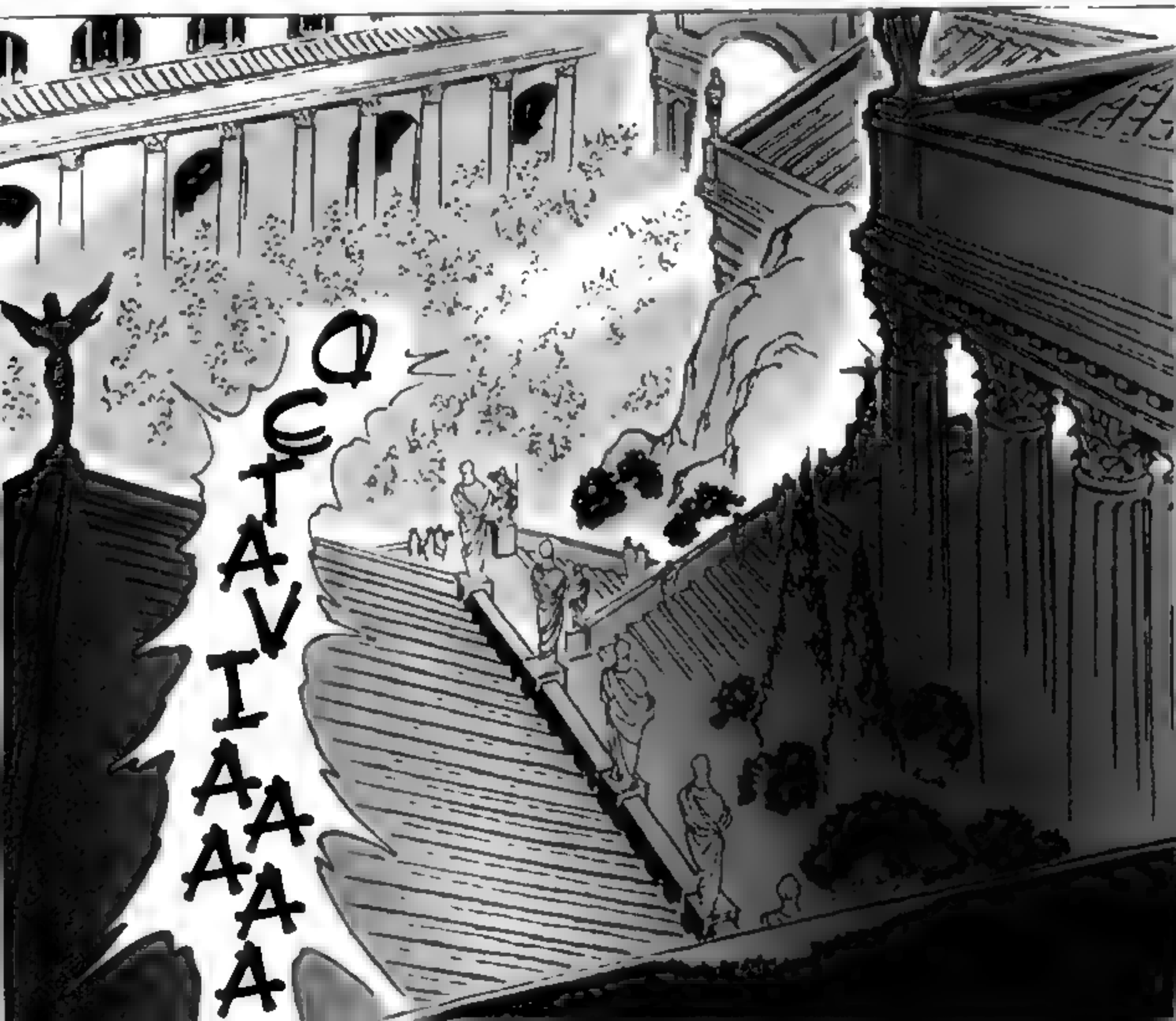
THE ROMAN CITIZENS WOULD SURELY AGREE.

AS SUCH, I HAVE DUTIFULLY SERVED OCTAV A,

FOR I BELIEVE THAT IS WHAT GOD INTENDED!

I MAY BE A MERE FREEDWOMAN SERVANT, BUT I HAVE NEVER RESENTED MY LOW BIRTH!




AAAAAA

ALL HAIL OCTAVIA!

DON'T LOSE TO THAT WENCH, POPPAEA!

OPEN YOUR EYES, NERO!

WE CITIZENS OF ROME ARE ON YOUR SIDE!

LADY POPPAEA!

COMPOSE YOURSELF!

WHAT DO WE DO?

GASP!

GO HOME

OPPOSE THE DIVORCE!

DRIVE OUT THAT LOOSE-LEGGED WOMAN!

SHE'S NOT WORTHY TO LIVE IN THE PALACE!

WE DEMAND TO SEE NERO!

LET US IN!

DOES HE KNOW NO SHAME!?

WITH MATRICIDE ALONE!?

IS HE NOT SATISFIED,

THE MOB IS ON THE VERGE OF RUSHING INSIDE!

RESORT TO ANY MEANS NECESSARY!

YOU MUST!

WE CANNOT ESCORT OCTAVIA OUT OF THE PALACE LIKE THIS!

YES, I'LL LEAVE THEM TO YOU, TIGEL-LINUS.

THE RABBLE BY FORCE?

SHALL I SUPPRESS,

Tigellinus

New Praetorian prefect after Burrus

I WILL ESCORT OCTAVIA OUT OF THE PALACE EVEN IF I HAVE TO CARVE OUT A PATH OF BLOOD.

YOU NEED NOT WORRY ANY LONGER

UNDER-STOOD

SPROUTS OF DISCONTENT SHOULD BE WEEDED OUT EARLY...

YOUR ACTIONS TODAY WILL LEAVE LIN-GERING RESENTMENT

I MUST POINT OUT,

HOWEVER, CAESAR,

.....

AND ATTRACT GROWING POPULAR-ITY AND SUPPORT...

SOME PEOPLE MIGHT SUIT YOU BETTER IF DEAD

IF OCTAVIA, FOR EXAMPLE, WERE TO KEEP LIVING,

...

MEANING...?

WHAT!?

ISLAND OF PANDATERIA,

LOCATION OF OCTAVIA'S EXILE

DID NERO NOT DIVORCE ME IN THE FIRST PLACE FOR BEING BARREN!?

AND THAT I EVEN HAD TO ABORT AN UNWANTED PREGNANCY FROM THIS AFFAIR!?

YOU SAY THAT I SEDUCED THE COMMANDER OF THE FLEET AT MISENUM!?

WHY WOULD HE STILL ACCUSE ME OF PLOTTING TREASON!?

MY ONLY WISH IS TO SIMPLY LIVE OUT THE REST OF MY DAYS QUIETLY!

I WOULD SEVER EVEN THAT RELATION IF I COULD!

I AM NOW ONLY NERO'S STEP-SISTER, NOTHING MORE!

THIS IS BEYOND ABSURD!

WE WILL KINDLY ASSIST

IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO DO SO,

YOU ARE TO COMMIT SUICIDE.

THE CAESAR'S ORDERS ARE CLEAR.

PLEASE HELP!

SOMEONE!

BUT MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE WE TIED HER TOO TIGHT, SHE'S NOT BLEEDING AS MUCH AS WE THOUGHT..

WE CUT HER WRISTS,

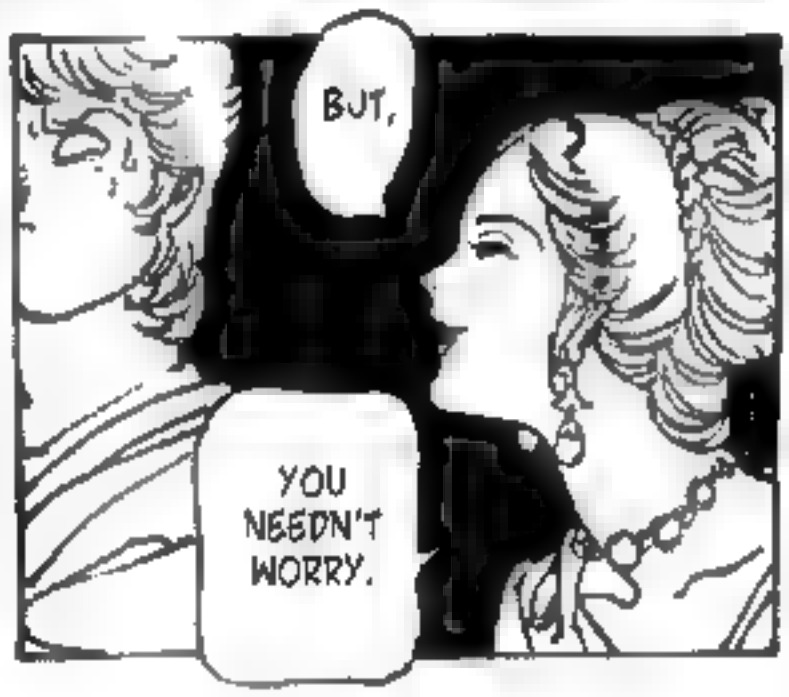
FINISHED?

RAISE THE TEMPER-ATURE OF THE BATH TO INTOLER-ABLE LEVELS.

THAT'LL TAKE CARE OF HER

Chapter 11
Nero vs. Paulus

SHE DIED SORELY RESENTING YOU, DEAR.
I'M SURE,
OH, WOULD YOU LOOK AT THE GRIMACE ON HER FACE.


BUT,
YOU NEEDN'T WORRY.

AND THEN,

NERO,

LAVISH OFFERINGS SHOULD BE GIVEN TO THE TEMPLE PRIESTS TO ASSUAGE HER SPIRIT

?

AS TO EXCITE THE WHOLE OF ROME!

A WEDDING SO GRAND AND LAVISH,

WE CAN FINALLY ANNOUNCE AND HOLD OUR WEDDING!

URP-

UU-

OH?

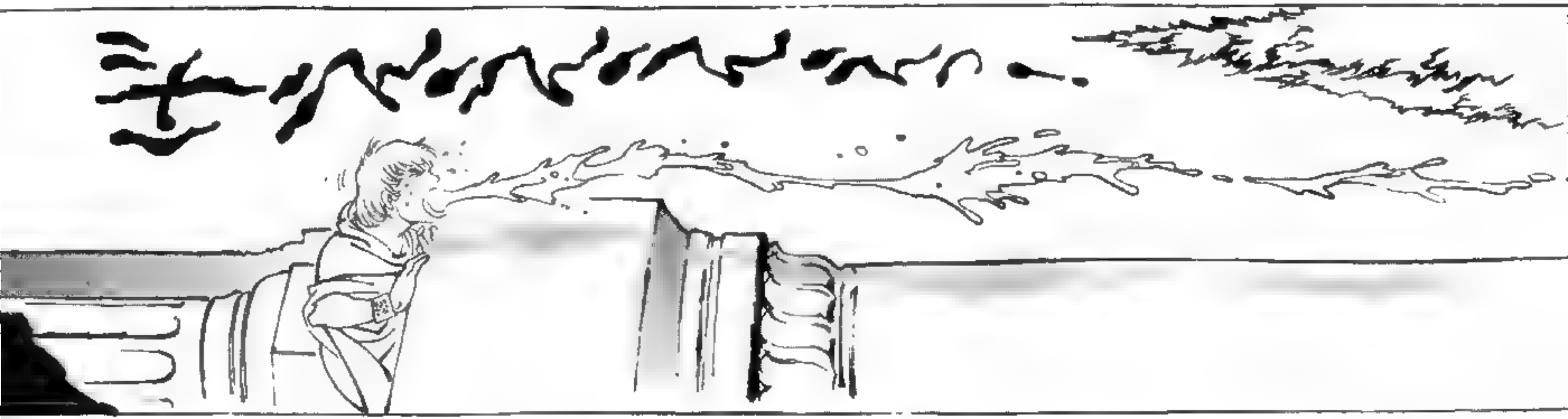
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

MNF-

NGH-

MDP-

?



PLEASE ALLOW THIS PETRONIUS TO MAKE A REMARK.

AS THE APPOINTED JUDGE OF THE HOUR,

IS MATCHED ONLY BY YOUR VIRTUOSITY WITH THE CITHARA!

YOUR FLAWLESS SINGING,

WHAT A WONDROUS VOICE!

BRAVO! BRAVO!

FOR YOU HAVE TAKEN ALL THE CULTURAL GLORIES OF GREECE AND MADE THEM YOURS!

TRULY, YOU ARE A GREATER CONQUERER OF CULTURE THAN EVEN ALEXANDER,

EVEN APOLLO OR HOMER WOULD FEEL DEEP ENVY UPON HEARING SUCH A PERFECT UNION OF MUSIC AND POETRY IN YOUR SONG.

HAHAHA!

I SUGGEST YOU PREPARE A GRAND PERFORMANCE FOR THAT OCCASION.

THE GREEKS WILL SURELY REQUEST YOU RETURN THEIR TREASURES IN DUE TIME.

WHO'S THAT!

THE ONE WHO FELL ASLEEP!

AS A REWARD, YOU MAY PICK ANY ONE OF MY AUGUSTIANI TO SPEND THE NIGHT WITH!

CHOOSE!

YOUR REMARK IS APPRECIATED HIGHLY AS EVER!

*AUGUSTIANI: GROUP OF YOUNG ROMAN EQUESTRIANS WHO SERVED AS NERO'S BODYGUARD AND CHEERLEADERS TO HEAP LAVISH PRAISE ONTO HIM

"VESPASIANUS ROMAN GENERAL WHO WOULD SUPPRESS THE GREAT JEWISH REVOLT DURING NERO'S REIGN, AND LATER BECOME THE ROMAN EMPEROR AS FOUNDER OF THE FLAVIAN DYNASTY

.....

OH IT'S YOU, VESPASIANUS. IF YOU DON'T MIND ME ASKING,

WHAT WERE YOUR IMPRESSIONS OF MY SONG JUST NOW?

HM?

FINE.

MM..

IT WAS,

If If If

TH S BANQUET TODAY IS NOT JUST FOR MY PERFORMANCE!

I ALMOST FORGOT! AH!

AND LET LOOSE!

FORGET ABOUT YOUR RANKS FOR NOW,

HA,

EXACTLY

OH, THOSE FLAVIANS ARE SOLDIERS THROUGH AND THROUGH.

CAESAR

YOU NEED NOT TRY TO MAKE THEM UNDER-STAND THE FINE ARTS,

YES!?

SPORUS!

JUST CELEBRATE FOR THE SAKE OF POPPAEA AND ME!

NO NEED FOR MODESTY!

WHA-

NO, PLE-

STRIP HIM BARE,

AND TIE HIM UP TO A PILLAR!

NO, PLEASE!

AHH!

KYAA!

SPORUS IS THE TYPE TO ORGASM WHEN SCARED!

I WILL GIVE A PRIZE TO THE ONE WHO CAN SCARE HIM INTO ORGASM!

KYAAAA!

LET'S GET STARTED THEN.

I COULD GOBBLE HIM UP!

NO.

LET ME!

HEY, DON'T BITE!

WAIT YOUR TURN!

きゃあ

きゃあ!!

HI THERE.

I KNOW.

AND I ALSO KNOW YOU'RE QUITE POPULAR, ESPE-CIALLY,

WITH THE YOUNG GIRLS.

I AM NO AUGUS-TIANI.

I WILL NOT PLAY WITH YOU, IF THAT IS WHAT YOU SEEK.

I DON'T GET THE WRONG IDEA.

I AM A GLADIATOR

HMPH.

THAT THERE ARE EVEN MEN OF FREEBORN STATUS WHO WISH TO BE A GLADIATOR

SO POPULAR, IN FACT,

YOU EMPTY FLATTERER.

SAVE YOUR COMPLI-MENTS FOR NERO.

I MUST CONFESS I'VE GROWN RATHER WEARY OF IT AS OF LATE.

AH, IF WE'RE TALKING ABOUT MY FLATTERY...

WILL YOU.

ACCEPT WITH A DRINK?

SO I WILL GLADLY SETTLE AT BEING JUST ACQUAINT-ANCES HERE AT THE OUT-SKIRTS OF SODOM.

NOR COULD I EVER FORCE YOU, CONSID-ERING YOUR STRENGTH.

I WON'T ASK YOU TO BE MY BED-FELLOW,

EVEN PEDERASTY, FOR EXAMPLE.

THUS, THEY ADOPTED MANY THINGS FROM THE GREEKS.

BUT IN THE END, IT'S MERELY AN IMITATION.

IT LACKS CULTURE OF DEEP HISTORICAL ROOTS.

THE HISTORY OF ROME IS SHALLOW.

EVER BEEN INTIMATE WITH NERO?

HAVE YOU,

THE MASSES MAY GOSSIP THAT HE IS A HOMOSEXUAL OR SADIST, BUT..

THE SAME APPLIES FOR NERO.

THAT IS THE REMUS WE ADMIRE!

AHH!

THE GREEKS WOULD SURELY SWOON BEFORE YOUR FEET!

I WOULD HAVE BEATEN HIM AND BEEN CRUCIFIED FOR IT!

HAD HE EVEN DARE TO TRY,

AND TIED UP BY HIS SOLDIERS.

I EVEN THOUGHT OF BITING MY TONGUE SO THAT I WOULD NOT BE DEFILED

WHEN I WAS ARRESTED SOME TIME AGO,

A WISE EMPEROR, OR A MURDEROUS TYRANT.

A SINGER, A POET, A CHARIOTEER, A LECHER, A SADIST, A PEDERAST,

WHETHER CONSCIOUSLY OR NOT

HE IS SIMPLY A PERSON TRYING DESPERATELY TO BE "SOMETHING."

NERO IS NOT ANYTHING.

WHY?

IT IS TO SEE BLOOD

THAT HE DETESTS THE MOST?

DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT IS,

KYAAA!

NOO!

STOP!

.....

BECAUSE BLOOD, OF ALL THINGS, IS REAL.

IT IS REALITY WHICH HURTS HIM DEEPLY

THE ONLY TRULY EXTRAORDINARY QUALITIES OF NERO IS HIS FEAR OF BEING HURT,

AND THE DURABILITY OF HIS VASE OF FANTASIES WHICH SHIELD HIM.

SO SOON AFTER HIS EXECUTION OF OCTAVIA...

HOW CAN HE HOLD SUCH A CELEBRATION OF SHAMELESS DEBAUCHERY,

PLEASE GUIDE NERO TO THE PROPER PATH...

O' LORD, IF YOU ARE LISTENING,

WHAT A PITIFUL FIGURE...

OHHH...

.....

PAULUS

GAA AAA HHH!

AGHH!

HELP!

AAAAAAAAAAAAAK

あ
あ
あ

AHHNN!

AH!

AH-

AA-

MN-

AHH!

HAH

HAH

HAH

HAHAHA!

-SPORUS!

IT IS I!

I HAVE CONQUERED HIM!

THROUGH FEAR,

HAHAHA!

IT IS I WHO CAUSED SPORUS TO REACH ORGASM FIRST!

AHAHA HAHA HAHA!

THIS IS ART, GENTLEMEN!

A VICTORY FOR SHEER CREATIVITY!

LED BY THE MOIRAI TO FREE YOU FROM CHAINS!

AH!

FEAR NOT, O' BEAUTIFUL PROMETHEUS!

FOR I AM HERACLES,

AH!

AA-

AH!

BUT WAIT A WHILE, PITIFUL PROMETHEUS. YOUR CHAINS WILL BE UNDONE SHORTLY, BUT YOUR SONG OF WOE MUST F RST BE SUNG!

IT IS PROMETHEUS, CHAINED TO THE COLD CLIFFS OF CAUCASUS!

OHH, WHO IS THIS!?

See what I, a god, endure from the gods.

AAAAAAHH!

O unversal mother Earth, and you, all-seeing orb of the sun, to you I call!

O you bright sky of heaven, you swift-winged breezes, you river-waters, and infinite laughter of the waves of ocean,

A! A AA

*FROM HERBERT WEIR SMYTH'S TRANSLATION OF AESCHYLUS' "PROMETHEUS UNBOUND"

Throughout the countless years of time appor-tioned me.

Look, with what shameful torture I am racked and must wrestle,

And yet, what am I saying?

Woe! Woe! For present misery and misery to come I groan.

Not knowing where it is fated that deliverance from these sorrows shall arise.

Such is the ignominious bondage the new commander of the blessed has devised against me.

Knowing that the might of Necessity permits no resistance.

All that is to be I know full well and in advance, nor shall any affliction come upon me unforeseen.

I must bear my allotted doom as lightly as I can,

I hunted out and stored in fennel stalk the stolen source of fire that has proved a teacher to mortals in every art and a means to mighty ends.

For it is because I bestowed good gifts on mortals that this miserable yoke of constraint has been bound upon me.

Riveted in fetters beneath the open sky...

Such is the offence,

For which I pay the penalty,

JESUS, TOO, WAS NAILED DOWN TO A CROSS TO ATONE FOR SINS.

PRE-CISELY

FOR HIS OWN SINS.

JESUS CHRIST DID NOT DIE ON A CROSS,

WHO ARE YOU?

HM?

THUS, THREE DAYS AFTER HIS DEATH,

JESUS, SON OF GOD, ATONED FOR THE SINS OF HUMANS.

HE RESURRECTED,

AND ASCENDED,

TO TAKE HIS PLACE IN HEAVEN.

THE MAN WHO HAS BEEN PERMITTED BY YOUR BENEVOLENCE,

I AM PAULUS,

TO LIVE UNDER HOUSE ARREST IN ROME.

AND HAD TO COME HERE FOR A TRIAL.

WHO GOT INTO TROUBLE WITH THE JEWS,

THE LEADER OF THE SO-CALLED CHRISTIANS,

HAHA. OH, SO YOU'RE THE ONE.

*TITUS WOULD LATER LEAD THE LEGIONS IN SUPPRESSING THE JEWISH REVOLT, DURING WHICH THE TEMPLE OF JERUSALEM WAS DESTROYED AS PROPHESIED

YES, FATHER.

ARE THEY THOSE NEW HERETICS OF THE JEWISH FAITH?

THESE CHRIS-TIANS THEY TALK OF...

TITUS

WHO HAS TAKEN IT UPON HIMSELF TO SPREAD THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS.

AM MERELY A WANDERING PREACHER,

FOR WHICH THEY PERSUADED PREFECT PILATE TO EXECUTE HIM.

I HEAR HE ANGERED MANY JEWS,

YES,

OF THE TEMPLE OF JERU-SALEM?

IS JESUS, THE MAN THEY WORSHIP, THAT SAME TROUBLEMAKER FROM A FEW DECADES AGO WHO PREDICTED THE DESTRUC-TION,

HMM..

THEN,

IF I WERE TO BE GUILTY OF SOME SIN,

HE WOULD ATONE FOR IT IN MY STEAD?

THIS JESUS FELLOW DIED TO ATONE THE SINS OF OTHERS?

YOU SAY SOME STRANGE THINGS.

NEVER HAVE I ORDERED HIM TO ATONE FOR MY SINS!

I HAVE NOT THE FAINTEST IDEA ABOUT YOUR GOD NOR THIS JESUS FIGURE!

AND BELIEVE THAT HE, AS JESUS, DIED FOR YOUR SINS AND THEN RESURRECTED, YES.

IF YOU ACCEPT GOD,

HOW WOULD THIS JESUS EVEN KNOW WHAT KIND OF SINS AN UNBORN PERSON LIKE ME WOULD BE GUILTY OF IN THE FUTURE!?

IF SO, THEN I WASN'T EVEN BORN AT THAT TIME!

FROM WHAT I DO KNOW, HOWEVER, THE PREFECT OF JUDAEA, PONTIUS PILATE, CRUCIFIED YOUR JESUS IN THE 15TH OR 16TH YEAR OF TIBERIUS' REIGN, IS THAT RIGHT!?

WHAT SINS AM I GUILTY OF!?

THEN TELL ME, IF YOU ARE SO SURE!

BUT THE SINS OF EARTHLY DESIRES THAT WE HUMANS ARE ALL TEMPTED BY

THE SIN THAT I SPEAK OF ARE NOT JUST YOUR OWN,

!

FAR ENOUGH...

AH, THE WICKED DEED WE ALL INEVITABLY COMMIT IN LIVING AN UNRESTRAINED LIFE, YOU MEAN.

THE SECOND VENUE FOR OUR PARTY TODAY IS READY FOR US AT THE SECOND FLOOR'S ATR UM!

FRIENDS!

COME, COME!

LET'S GO!

RIGHT AWAY!

DON'T DELAY!

COME!

COME

TODAY IS A JOYOUS DAY!

AND CONTINUE OUR MERRI-MENTS!

LET US DR NK UP THERE,

EMBRACING MEN?

FRATRICIDE? THAT I DID NOT LOVE MY WIFE?

MATRICIDE!?

TO DEATH!?

OR THAT I SENTENCED OCTAVIA,

SHE WOULD HAVE HAD ME STAY HER OBEDIENT LITTLE CHILD FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE...!

I AM NOT THE GUILTY ONE HERE! HAD I NOT DONE AWAY WITH BRITANNICUS, HE WOULD HAVE SURELY KILLED ME IN TIME!

IT WAS NOT MY FAULT THAT I BECAME A MAN

A CAESAR, NO LESS!

THE SAME WITH MY MOTHER! HER LUST FOR POWER WAS INSATIABLE! SHE KILLED AND EXILED MANY POLITICAL ENEMIES WITHOUT BATTING AN EYE...

GOD WILL EQUALLY WELCOME ALL WHO HAVE TRULY REPENTED AND ACCEPTED JESUS AS LORD INTO HIS KINGDOM.

WHEN THE TIME OF JUDGMENT COMES,

YOU NEED NOT JUSTIFY YOURSELF BEFORE ME.

WORRY NOT,

FOR GOD WILL NOT JUDGE YOUR PAST

AS FOR OCTAVIA!

OCTAVIA WAS...

OCTAVIA WAS...

THEN LET ME MEET,

THIS SO CALLED SON OF GOD!

I...

I SEE...

TO BELIEVE IN GOD, HIS SON, JESUS,

THAT S "FAITH."

AND IN HIS SACRIFICE AND RES-SURECTION!

I WILL JUDGE IF THIS GOD OF YOURS WILL TRULY FORGIVE A PERSON'S S NS AFTER MEETING HIM!

I'M AFRAID THAT'S..

THEN LEAD ME TO HIM!

MEET NG GOD HIMSELF MIGHT BE TOO MUCH, BUT SURELY ONE CAN MEET HIS SON, JESUS, R GHT?

YOU AIM TO CONTROL THE MIGHTY ROMAN EMPIRE BY ENSNARING ITS SUBJECTS TO YOUR NEFARIOUS "FAITH!"

SO THAT THEY WILL FEEL INDEBTED AND BECOME YOUR SLAVES!

YOU MANIPU-[LATE A] PERSON'S GUILTY HEART,

YOU DECEIVE THEM WITH YOUR WILD TALES OF RESURREC-TION WHICH SO CONVEN-IENTLY WAS WITNESSED ONLY BY A SELECT FEW OF YOUR FAITH!

I'M ONTO YOU NOW..

HAHA,

IS NOTH NG MORE THAN A WICKED HERESY!

IT'S CLEAR TO ME THAT THIS CHRISTIAN FAITH OF YOURS,

MANY TIMES HAVE I PREACHED FOR SERVANTS TO SINCERELY SERVE THEIR MASTERS,

AS THEY WOULD SERVE GOD HIMSELF, AND THAT GOD WILL APPRECIATE ANY GOOD DEED!

AS LONG AS A RULER S ACKNOW-LEDGED BY GOD, I TEACH PEOPLE TO DUTIFULLY OBEY HIM.

T-

THAT IS BEYOND ABSURD!

THAT IS WHY-

THUS, JESUS PREACHED TO LOVE OUR NEIGHBOURS AND ENEMIES ALIKE!

TO DO GOOD IS TO SHOW LOVE!

THE NATURE OF GOD THE FATHER IS LOVE!

WHY WOULD HE TELL PEOPLE TO DO GOOD!?

IF YOUR GOD DOES NOT CARE ABOUT THE GOOD OR EVIL DONE IN ONE'S PAST,

IT IS A RELIGION THAT MAKES MOCKERY OF AN AUGUSTUS!

FEIGNING MEEKNESS, EVEN AS YOU ADVOCATE FOR THE PEOPLE TO ONLY GIVE THEIR SOUL AND BODY TO YOUR GOD!

YOU SECRETLY SNEER AT AUTHORITY IN THIS WORLD,

BEFORE ME EVER AGAIN!

GET OUT!

AND DON'T YOU EVER SHOW YOUR HYPOCRITICAL FACE,

-LATER THAT NIGHT-

Chapter 12
Bedroom

AGHH!

SOME-
ONE...

S...

HELLLLLLLLP!

IT WASN'T ME!
NO! THE ONE WHO KILLED YOU WAS MY MOTHER!
THEN WHAT ABOUT ME... BROTHER?
IT WAS NOT ME!
IT WAS NOT ME!

WAS YOU!

THE ONE WHO KILLED ME...

IMPERATOR...

WHO SHOULD HAVE BEEN.

IT WAS ME.

HOW COULD YOU DO THIS TO ME.

WHEN I LOVED YOU SO?

NERO...

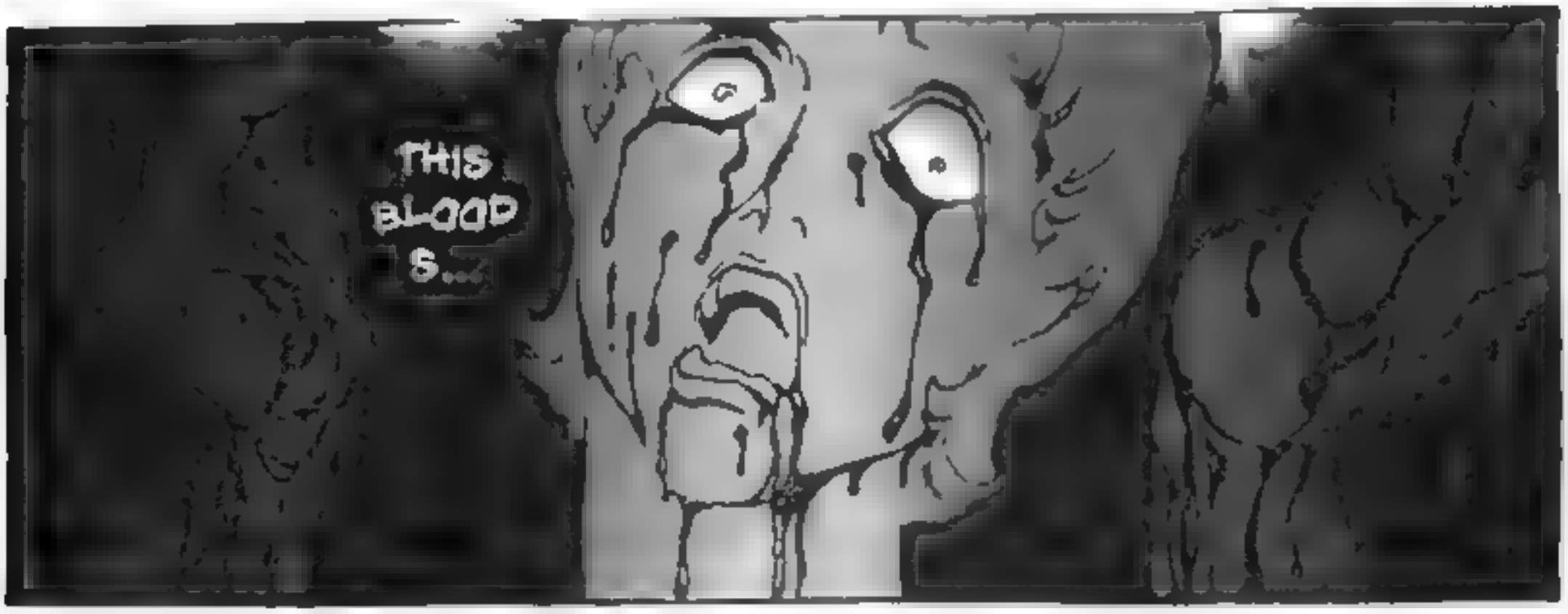
BLOOD...

MORE DEARLY THAN ANYONE...
IT WAS I WHO LOVED YOU.

MAKE THE BLOOD STOP...
IT HURTS...

MAKE IT STOP...
IT HURTS, IT HURTS...

I DON'T NEED ANYTHING...
SO JUST MAKE THIS BLOOD...
I DON'T NEED LOVE...

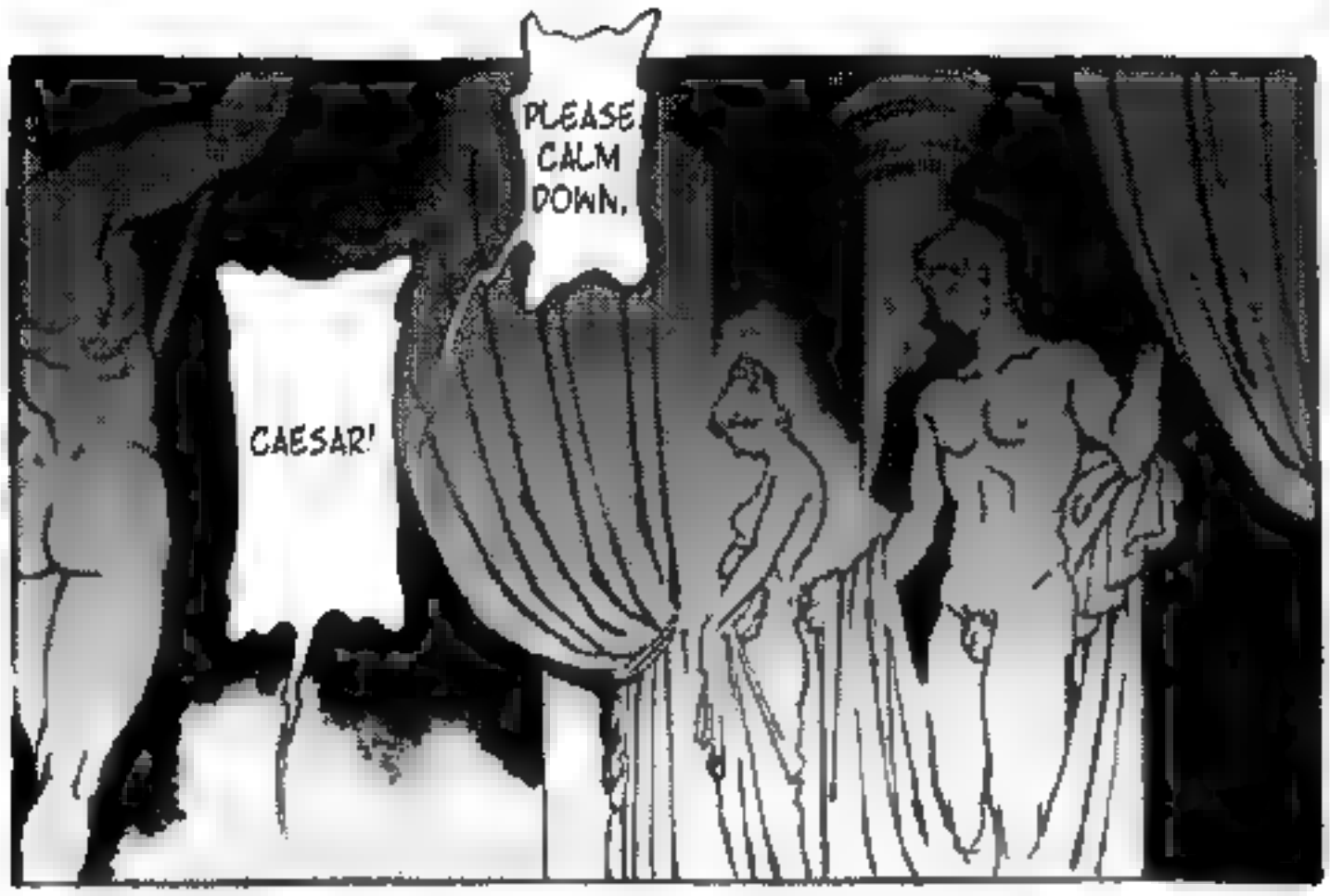

THIS BLOOD S...

AAAGHHHHHHHH

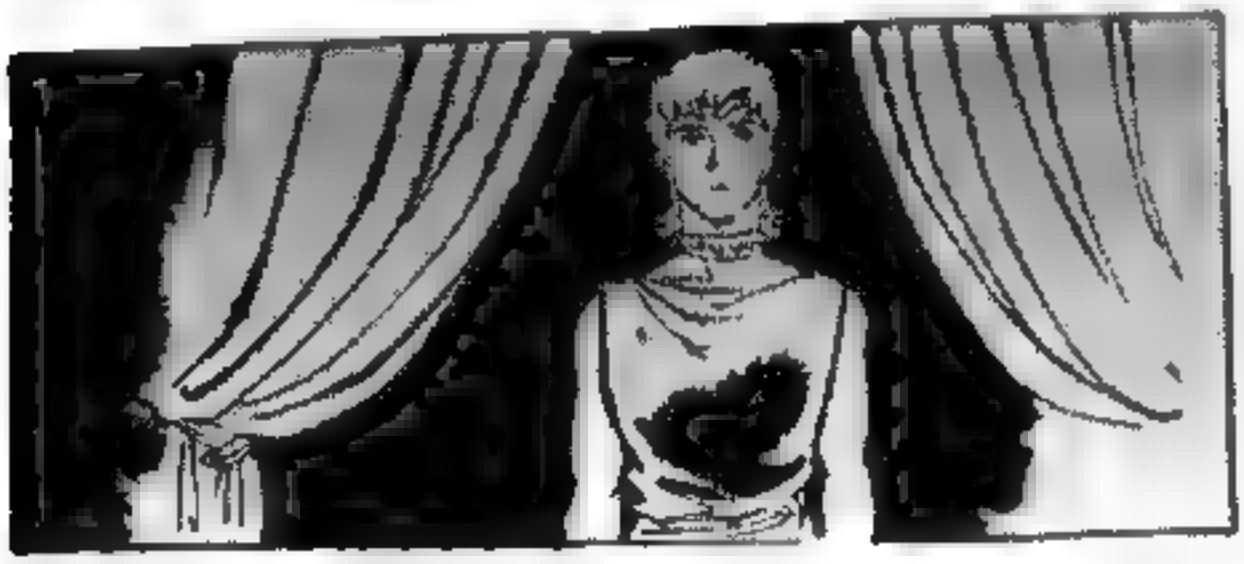
REMUS!

THE CAESAR CALLS FOR YOU!

ATTEND TO HIM AT ONCE!


PLEASE CALM DOWN.
CAESAR!

YOU ONLY SAW A NIGHTMARE.
THERE IS NOTHING TO FEAR HERE.



OOHHH!
REMUS!

THANK GOODNESS YOU'VE COME!
I WAS SO TERRIFIED.

HEY REMUS

SHOULDN'T YOU BE STAYING AT THE LUDUS,

IF YOU'RE A GLADI-ATOR?

.....

PLEASE..

STAY BY MY SIDE UNTIL MORNING.

OR DO YOU PLAN TO TRAIN BY FIGHTING GHOSTS TONIGHT?

OTHER-WISE, YOUR SKILLS WILL GET RUSTY

IF I SHARE A BED WITH HER,

WE'D ONLY END UP HAVING SEX.

THAT'S NO GOOD

JUST SPEND THE NIGHT WITH POPPAEA INSTEAD?

WHY DON'T YOU,

I ALREADY HAVE HUNDREDS OF OTHERS WHO WANT NOTHING ELSE FROM ME,

OTHER THAN TO MADLY FORNICATE LIKE ANIMALS.

I KNOW HOW MUCH YOU DISLIKE THAT

WON'T ASK FOR ANYTHING LIKE THAT FROM YOU,

DON'T WORRY REMUS

I WISH,

LIVE ANOTHER MOMENT HERE!

I DID NOT HAVE TO,

IT'S HAUNTED BY TOO MANY GHASTLY EVENTS OF THE PAST..

IS EERIE.

THIS PLACE,

ONLY BE ATOP THE PALATINE HILL?

WHY MUST THE IMPERIAL PALACE,

AND OF ITS SEVEN HILLS...

ROME IS SUCH A LARGE CITY...

THE SOUTHERN FACE OF THE OPPIAN HILL IS LOVELY!?

DON'T YOU THINK,

LOOK!

FOR INSTANCE...

WHY'?

THAT WOULD NOT BE RIGHT

NO,

JUST IMAGINE A PALACE WITH A TERRACE CARVED OUT FROM THAT HILL!

IT'S PACKED WITH INSULAE ON EVERY STREET, WHICH IN TURN ARE CRAMMED WITH EVEN MORE PEOPLE.

THERE ARE TOO MANY PEOPLE LIVING THERE ALREADY.

IT WOULD BE SPLENDID!

AND ONE COULD REDIRECT THE WATER TO BUILD A MANMADE LAKE AT THE HILL'S BOTTOM!

'INSULA: MULTI-STORIED APARTMENTS, USUALLY FOR THE PLEBS

WHO PRODUCE NOTHING OF VALUE, YET ARROGANTLY CLA M THEIR ENTITLED RIGHTS AS CITIZENS!?

THE FOOLISH RABBLE ADDICTED TO FREE HANDOUTS OF GRA N,

THE SAME PEOPLE WHO'RE SATISFIED AS LONG AS THERE ARE BREAD AND C RCUSES!?

NOT POSS BLE BECAUSE OF THE PEOPLE, YOU SAY?

THE JEWS AND CHRISTIANS BOTH SAY THAT THE PALACE WILL CRUMBLE AND THE CITY WILL BURN WHEN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT COMES!

DID YOU KNOW, REMUS?

WITHOUT ANY OLD, SQUALID BUILDINGS AND HOMES TO GET IN MY WAY,

I COULD REBUILD THE ETERNAL CITY IN LINE WITH TRUE ARTISTIC BEAUTY!

HA HA HA HA

SURELY FOUND THE MASSES AS REPULSIVE AS I DO!

THE JEWISH RABBIS AND JESUS,

AHH!

HOW WONDERFUL IT WOULD BE!

IF ONLY THIS DISORDERLY AND UNS GHTLY CITY COULD BE ENGULFED .N FIRE,

TO YOU, THEY WERE ONLY REPULSIVE LANDS INHABITATED BY IGNORANT BARBARIANS, AND SO OUGHT TO BE RESHAPED ACCORDING TO ROMAN IMAGE.

WERE ONLY INHABITATED BY THE SQUALID TOWNS OF THE FILTHY MASSES.

I SEE.

SO FOR YOU ROMANS, PLACES LIKE GALLIA AND GERMANIA,

FARMED ITS FIELDS AND HUNTED ON ITS MOUN-TAINS

WE RAISED SHEEP AND CATTLE ON ITS PASTURES.

IT WAS AN IRREPL-ACEABLE HOMELAND!

BUT I'LL HAVE YOU KNOW THAT FOR US,

WE WORSHIPPED OUR OWN GODS AND PRESERVED OUR TRADITIONAL CUSTOMS.

WE WERE PERFECTLY HAPPY TO LIVE BY OUR OWN WAYS.

THAT IS,

UNTIL THE ROMANS CAME...

I WAS DETERMINED TO SURVIVE,

SO THAT I COULD AVENGE MY PEOPLE!

EVEN THE WEAK WILL NOT STAY TRAMPLED ON WITHOUT A WORD FOREVER!

I'VE BEEN LIVING SINCE THEN ONLY SO THAT I COULD FIND A WAY TO KILL CORBULO ONE DAY!

REMUS!

YOU MEAN THE GENERAL,

THAT I DISPATCHED TO ARMENIA...?

CORBULO?

STAY W TH ME!

PLEASE, REMUS!

DON'T LEAVE ME ALONE!

WAIT!

DON'T GO, REMUS!

THIS IS BENEATH YOU

YOU'RE THE RULER OF THE WORLD, YOU KNOW.

STOP THIS,

CAESAR

HERE SO MERCILESSLY BUTCHERED

OTHERWISE, I WILL NOT UNDERSTAND WHY MY FRIENDS, PARENTS, BROTHERS, AND EVEN MY ADORABLE LITTLE SISTER,

?"

?"

?"

CAW

CAW

CAW

LEADING THE LEGIONS RIGHT NOW...

CORBULO IS IN ARMENIA,

YOU'RE THE MOST POWERFUL MAN IN THE MOST POWERFUL CITY IN THE WORLD.

YOU MUST NOT SHOW ME SUCH ABJECT WEAKNESS.

WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO HAVE HIM SLIT HIS WRISTS?

REMUS!

LIKE HE DID TO YOUR VILLAGE IN GERMANIA,

BUTCHERING MORE PEOPLE UNWILLING TO FOLLOW HIS ORDERS,

HE MAY BE,

FOR THE GLORY OF THE ROMAN CAESAR...

DO NOT BELITTLE IT.

THAT IS MY POWER.

IF I ORDER SOMEONE TO DIE, THEN HE MUST OBEY...

WHAT IS THIS LONELINESS?

WHAT IS THIS DREARY HELPLESSNESS I FEEL IN MY HEART...?

AAHH...

BUT,

I AM,

POWER-FUL...

IF I COMMAND THE WORLD TO DESTROY ITSELF, THEN IT WILL BE DESTROYED.

IS THE PAIN I FEEL CAUSED BY HAVING TO ENDURE ALONE THE TEMPTATION OF THIS IRRES STIBLE POWER?

IS THE UNEASE I FEEL MY UNEASE AT BEING EVER-LESS CONFIDENT THAT I CAN CONTROL MY DESIRES...?

WE WERE MISTAKEN

IT SEEMS...

ARE RINGING HOLLOWER THAN EVER

THE THINGS WE DID, BELIEVING THEM TO BE FOR THE GOOD OF THE EMPIRE AND ITS SUBJECTS,

SHOULD STEP DOWN SOON

YOU TOO,

OH,

SENECA

BUT I'M SURE YOU'VE FELT YOUR OWN PANGS OF CONSCIENCE FOR USING AN EASILY CONVINCED EMPEROR TO DICTATE GOVERNMENT IN WHICHEVER WAY YOU WISHED

ALL OUR TALK OF LOYALTY TO THE HOUSE OF CAESAR MAY SOUND GRAND,

YOU'VE AMASSED QUITE A FORTUNE TOO, HAVE YOU NOT?

WE HAD A GOOD RUN.

BURRUS.

THE ERA OF CAESAR, TOO, IS OVER,

EITHER WAY,

OUR ERA IS OVER.

IT IS REGRETTABLE THAT I NOW LEAVE MY POST TO A MAN LIKE TIGELLINUS, BUT...

IS SIMPLY A VICTIM OF OUR OWN DREAMS WE SORELY WISHED TO ACTUALIZE..

PERHAPS NERO,

THERE'S NO RHYME NOR REASON THAT A LEGITIMATE RULER CAN ONLY BE FROM THOSE OF CAESAR'S BLOOD

THE BENEVOLENCE AND CLEMENCY IN GOVERNMENT I ADVOCATED FOR NEVER EXISTED IN THE FIRST PLACE.

IT WAS MERELY AN ILLUSION.

BUT EVEN BEFORE THEIR ACTUAL RETIREMENTS, NERO CAME TO SEE THEIR ADVICE AS LESS AND LESS NEEDED...

WITH THIS, THE TWO PRINCIPAL GUIDING HANDS OF NERO'S EARLY REIGN WERE NOW NO MORE.

SOON AFTER THE DEATH OF BURRUS, THE FORMER PRAETORIAN PREFECT, SENECA RESIGNED FROM HIS POSITION AS NERO'S ADVISOR.

IT WAS AROUND THIS TIME THAT NERO LOST MUCH INTEREST IN GOVERNMENT, AND REDIRECTED HIS ENERGIES INTO SINGING, POETRY, AND THEATRE.. IN SHORT, HE CAME TO VALUE THE REALM OF THE IMMATERIAL ARTS OVER MATERIAL MATTERS OF REALITY.

PETRONIUS, SKILLED AND INFLUENTIAL AS EVER N THE AREAS OF NERO'S HOBBIES...

AND,

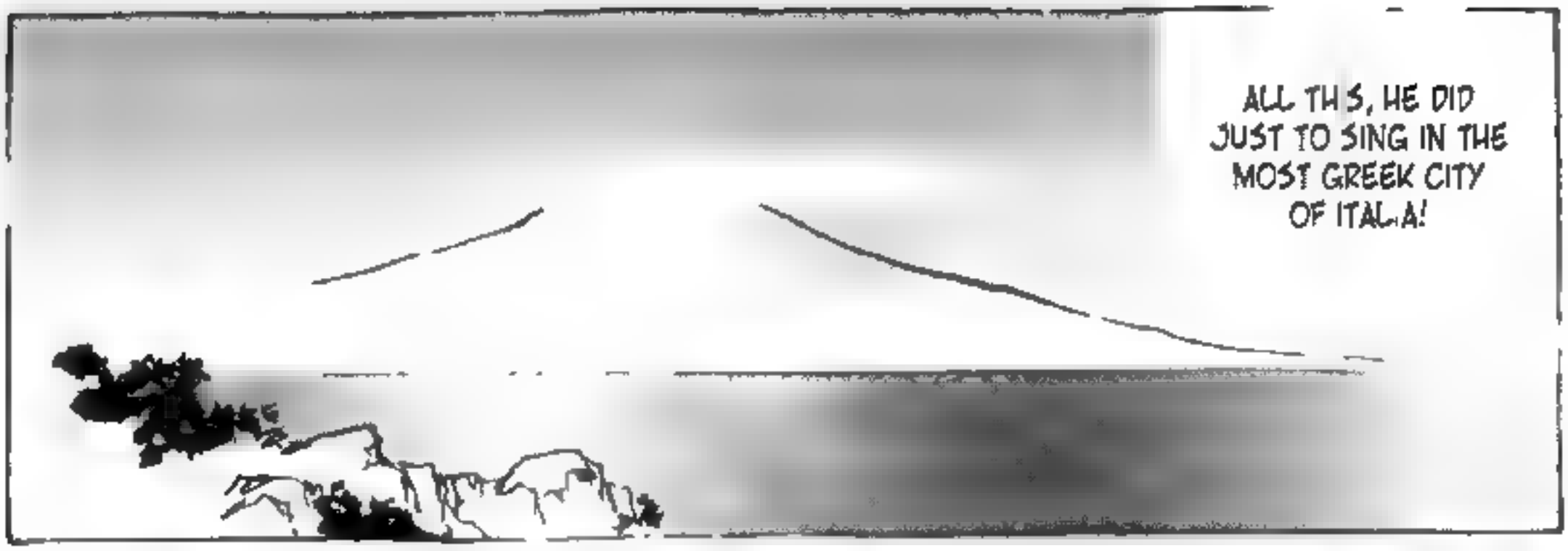
IN THE R PLACE NOW STOOD TIGELLINUS,

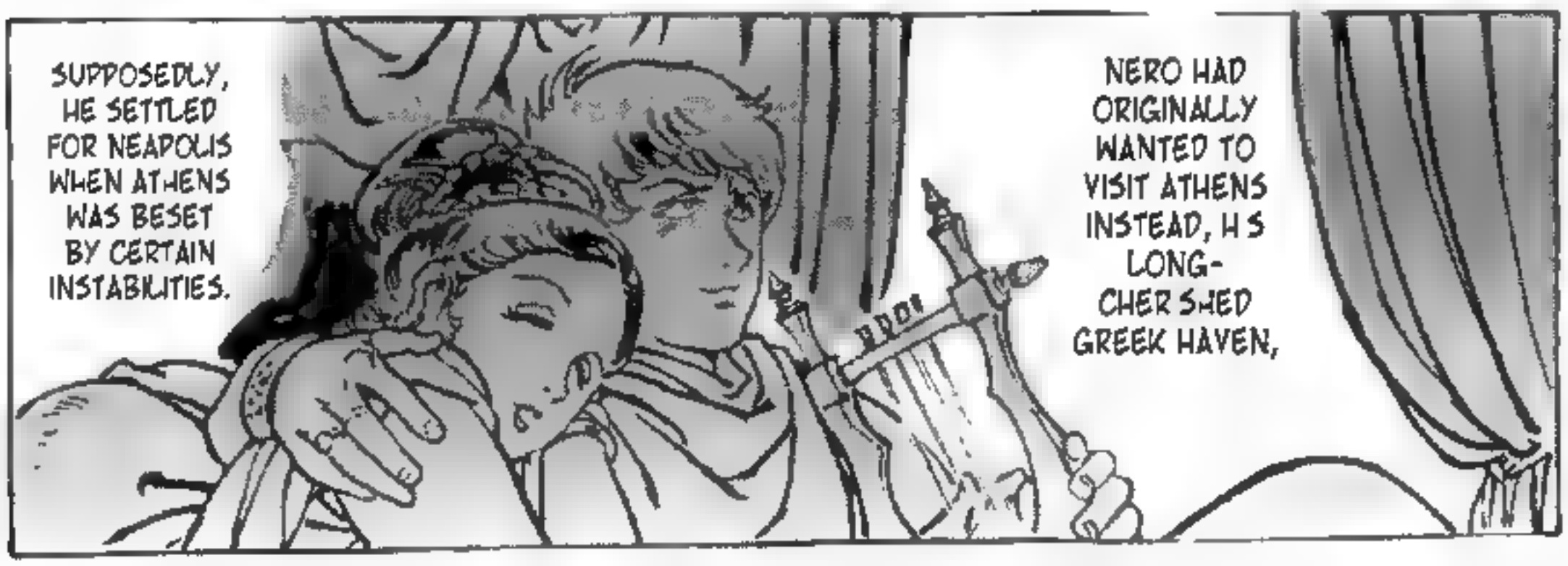
BUT HE SEEMED MORE INTENT THAN EVER TO AVERT H S EYES AWAY FROM REALITY NOW.

OF COURSE, NERO ALWAYS HAD BEEN OF THAT INCL NATION,

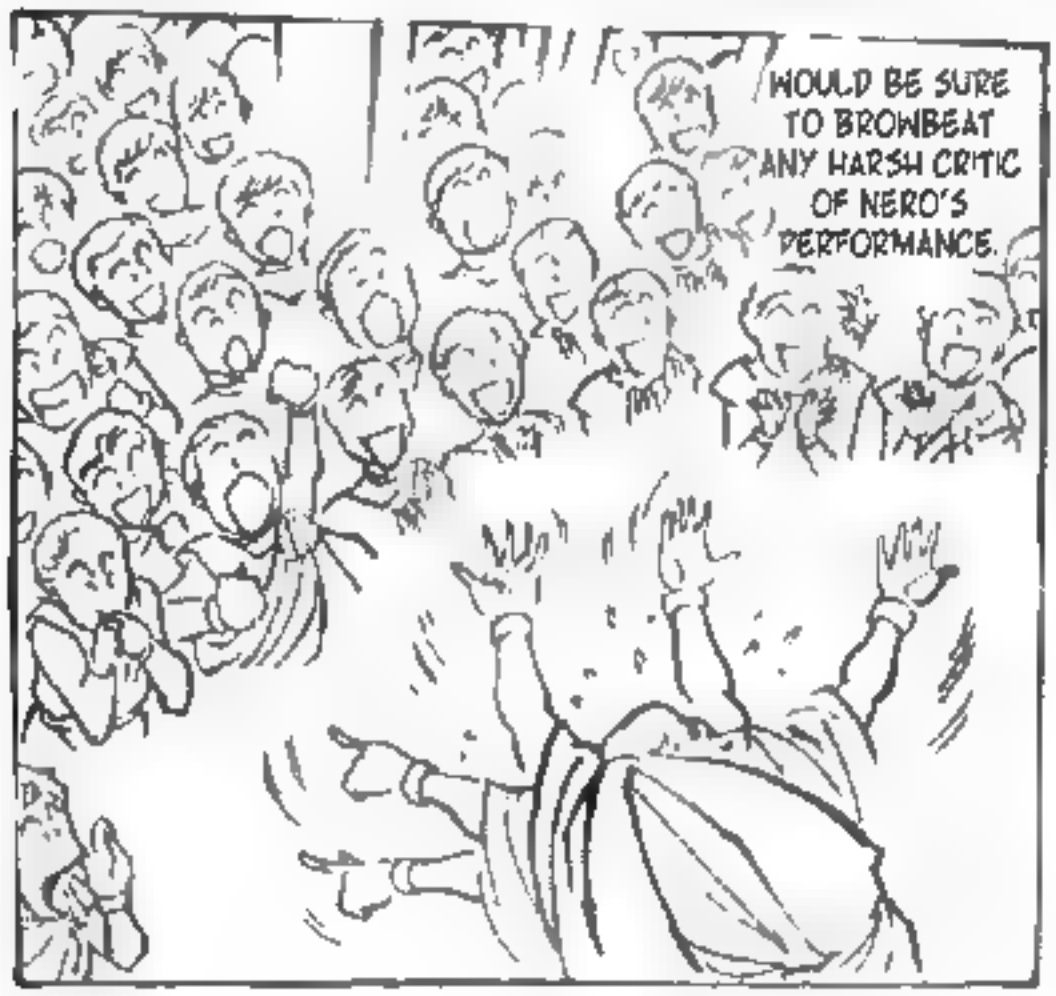
H S TR P TO NEAPOLIS WAS ONE EXAMPLE OF THIS.

HE ARRANGED A GRAND PROCESSION TO ESCORT HIM, AS IF HE WERE SWITCHING THE SEAT OF THE IMPERIAL PALACE.




SUPPOSEDLY, HE SETTLED FOR NEAPOLIS WHEN ATHENS WAS BESET BY CERTAIN INSTABILITIES.
NERO HAD ORIGINALLY WANTED TO VISIT ATHENS INSTEAD, HIS LONG-CHERISHED GREEK HAVEN,

BUT PERHAPS IT WAS ALSO TRUE THAT HE DID NOT YET HAVE THE CONFIDENCE TO PUBLICALLY PERFORM IN FRONT OF THE GREEKS, WHO OF ALL PEOPLE HAD A MOST DISCERNING EAR FOR FINE MUSIC.



THESE FANATIC SUPPORTERS OF NERO'S ART,

MOST SURPRISING WAS THE FACT THAT NERO HAD A NEW THEATRE BUILT IN NEAPOLIS JUST FOR HIS PERFORMANCE ON THIS TRIP.

THE PREVIOUSLY EXISTING THEATRE HAD PROVED TOO SMALL FOR NERO'S TASTE.

I'LL ADMIT, IT WAS CERTAINLY NOT BAD

WELL, I'M NO UNDERSTANDER OF ART, BUT...

THE AUGUSTIANI NATURALLY WERE EUPHORIC IN THEIR PRAISE FOR HIS PERFORMANCE AS PLANNED, BUT...

AS FOR THE ACTUAL PERFORMANCE HE EVENTUALLY GAVE THERE...

IT WAS THEN THAT I COULD SEE NERO'S SORROW.

.....

NERO COULD HAVE SURELY EARNED THE GENJINE APPLAUSE OF NEAPOLITANS.

EVEN WITHOUT THEM,

THE SORROW OF BEING UNABLE TO PERCEIVE GENU NE LOVE AND ADMIRATION AS A RESULT OF HIM LOOKING AWAY FROM REALITY...

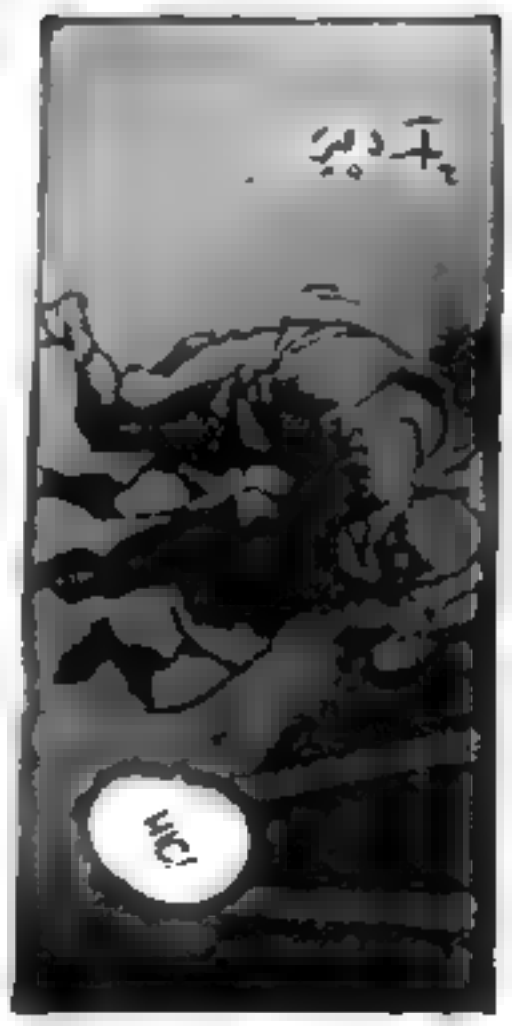
THE SORROW OF A MAN WHO CAN GET EVERYTHING HIS WAY, YET IS UNABLE TO OBTA N TRUE HAPPINESS, FOR IT CAN ONLY EXIST BY FIRST OVERCOMING HARDSHIP...

ESPECIALLY WHEN CONSIDERING THAT ROME, IN NERO'S ABSENCE, WOULD SOON BE ENGULFED IN A HORRID INCIDENT...

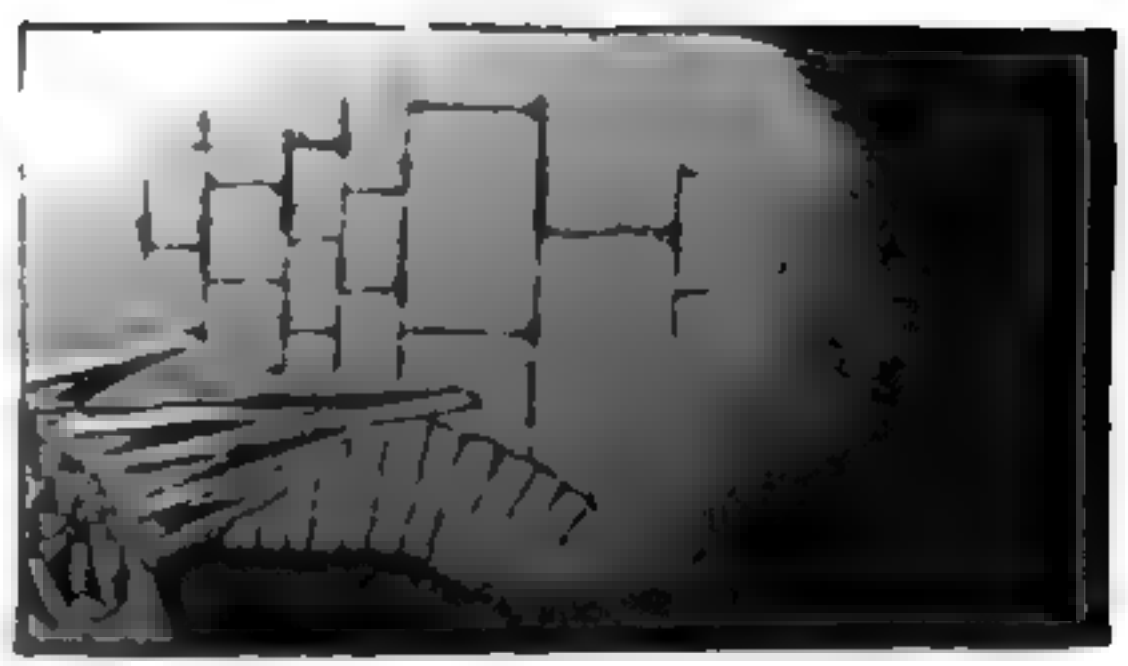
FOR THIS NERO, HIS DAYS AT NEAPOLIS, IN SPITE OF ALL ITS HOLLOW FACADE, MAY HAVE BEEN HIS LAST MOMENT OF PEACE,

THE NERO WHO PARADOXICALLY SINKS DEEPER AND DEEPER INTO LONELINESS AS A RESULT OF HIS DESIRE TO HAVE EVERYTHING...

THE NERO WHO TREMBLES, THE NERO WHO YEARNS FOR COMPAN ONSHIP, AND THE NERO WHO IS HAUNTED BY HIS SINS...


UIC!

MMM..



FIRE!

NEAR THE CIRCUS NEIGHBOURING THE PALATINE HILL.

THE BLAZE STARTED ON A MIDSUMMER NIGHT.

THE FIRE WAS QUICK TO SPREAD.

AS THIS AREA WAS CRAMMED WITH RUN-DOWN HOMES,

THE FLAMES THEN BEGAN TO CLIMB ITS WAY UP THE PALATINE HILL WHERE THE PALACE STOOD.

UPON HEARING THE NEWS, NERO RUSHED TO ROME FROM HIS VILLA AT ANTIUM,

AND THEN CLIMBED UP THE ESQUILINE HILL TO GET A FULL VIEW OF THE UNFOLDING CATASTROPHE.

Chapter 13
Great Fire

BY THE TIME NERO HAD ARRIVED AT ROME, THE FLAMES HAD ALREADY REACHED HIS PALACE AND HE COULD NOT EVEN APPROACH IT
DESPITE THE LATER RUMOUR THAT NERO HAD STOOD ON THE TERRACE OF HIS PALACE, SINGING TO THE SIGHT OF THE BURNING CITY,
BUT I WILL SAY THIS FOR THE SAKE OF NERO'S HONOUR,
STUNNED TO SILENCE, AND HIS EYES IN A TRANCE...

THERE, NERO SIMPLY STOOD FOR THE LONGEST TIME.

WE WILL ENTER THE CITY!

QUICKLY!

LET US HEAD INTO REGIONES IV THROUGH VIII!

BRING ME MY ARMOUR!

PRAETORIANS! YOU ARE TO HEAD STRAIGHT PAST THE FORUM BOARIUM TO ARRIVE AT THE FORUM ROMANUM!

DEMOLISH THE BUILDNGS ON BOTH SIDES OF THIS STREET SO THAT THE FIRE CANNOT SPREAD!

WE MUST PROTECT THE TEMPLE OF JUPITER AND THE BUILDINGS LEFT TO US BY CAESAR AUGUSTUS!

EVEN IF THE WHOLE CITY IS TO BURN DOWN,

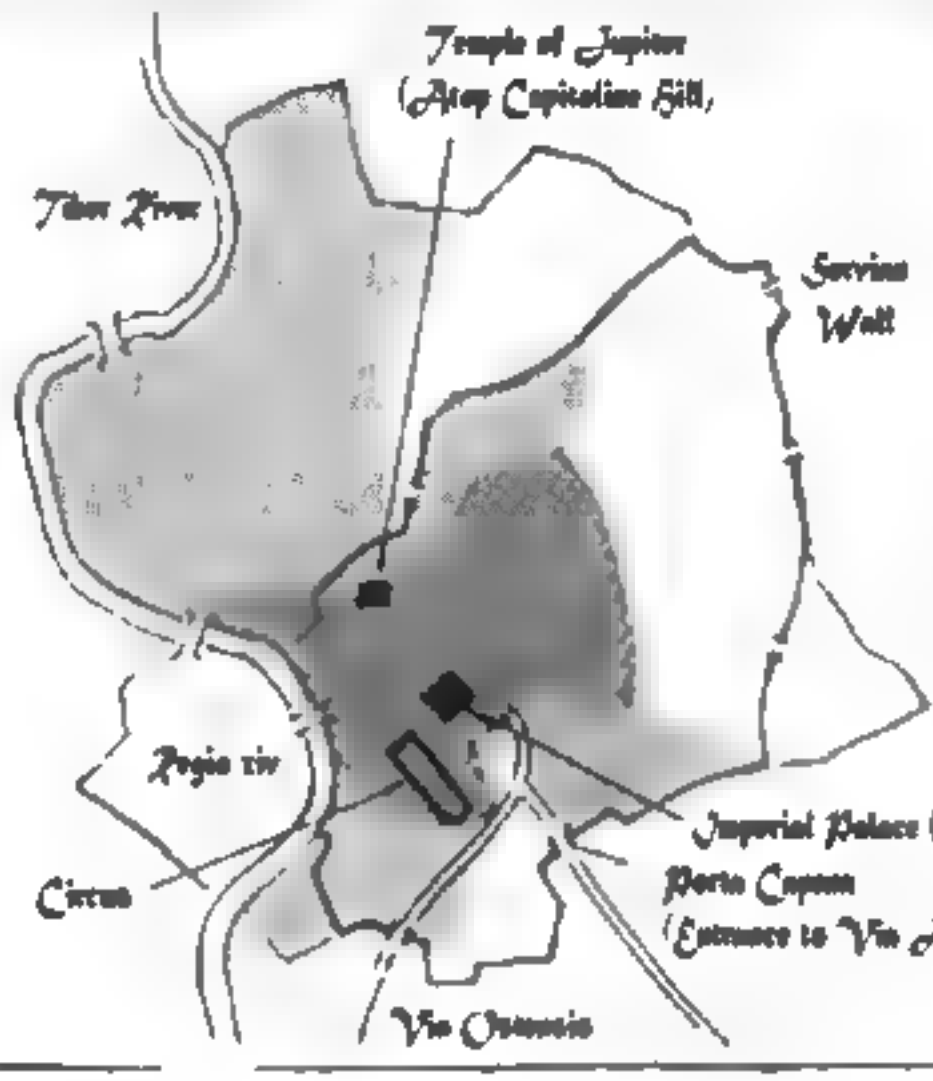
THESE MAY BE THE FLAMES OF HELL,

YET ROME WILL NOT FALL!

ROME WILL REVIVE!

NERO TOOK THE HELM OF THE FIREFIGHTING EFFORTS, AS IF LEADING AN ARMY AT THE FRONTLINES OF BATTLE.

ONLY 3 REGIONES AT THE VERY OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY AND REGIO XIV, ACROSS THE TIBER RIVER AND HOME TO MANY JEWS, SURVIVED INTACT.



THE FIRE LASTED FOR 6 DAYS, AND THE CENTRAL REGIONES OF ROME HAD ALL BURNT TO ASHES.

OF THE 14 REGIONES ROME WAS DIVIDED INTO, 3 WERE WHOLLY LAID LEVEL WITH THE GROUND WHILE 7 ONLY HAD A FEW DILAPIDATED AND HALF-BURNT HOMES LEFT.

BUT HERE TOO, NERO SEIZED THE SPOTLIGHT

BUT EVEN AFTER THE FLAMES HAD DIED, ITS AFTERMATH WAS ANOTHER ORDEAL. THE CITIZENS WHO HAD LOST THEIR HOMES NEEDED TO BE PROVIDED WITH FOOD AND TEMPORARY SHELTERS. THERE WAS ALSO THE MATTER OF RECONSTRUCTION PLANNING AND THE VAST AMOUNT OF RESOURCES WHICH NEEDED TO BE BROUGHT BEFORE REBUILDING COULD BEGIN.

NERO SET UP TENTS AT CAMPUS MARTIUS TO HOUSE THE HOMELESS AND BROUGHT GRAIN FROM THE PORT AT OSTIA TO FREELY DISTRIBUTE TO THE HUNGRY. HE ALSO ARRANGED FOR NEARBY CITIES TO SEND ADDITIONAL SUPPLIES OF MEAT, CHEESE, AND VEGETABLES SO THAT FOOD PRICES WOULD NOT SPIRAL BEYOND CONTROL.

AS THE CITIZENS CLEARED THE BURNT REMAINS OF THEIR HOMES,

EVEN JULIUS CAESAR OR AUGUSTUS WOULD BE HARD-PRESSED TO MATCH THE ADMIRABLE DEEDS OF NERO DURING THIS WHOLE ORDEAL...

MOREOVER, HE ORDERED THE SHIPS THAT BROUGHT GRAIN UP FROM OSTIA ALONG THE TIBER RIVER MUST BE LADEN WITH DEBRIS BEFORE THEY COULD RUN DOWN-STREAM AGAIN.

A THOROUGH PLAN IS NECESSARY!
FOR A PROPER 'RECON-' STRUCTION,
OTHERWISE, WE WILL ONLY GET ANOTHER DISORDERLY CITY PRONE TO FIRES!
THE CITIZENS MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO BUILD HAPHAZARDLY!
THE FUNDS CAN COME FROM THE STATE TREASURY!
AND PORTICOS BUILT AT THE R FRONT!
THE INSULAE SHOULD HAVE OPEN SPACES BETWEEN THEM,
BUILDINGS FOR PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL USE SHOULD BE NO HIGHER THAN 60 PEDES, AND SHOULD BE KEPT SEPARATE BY THEIR OWN WALLS! THEY SHOULD ALSO BE BUILT PRIMARILY OF STONE SO AS TO PREVENT ANOTHER CONFLAGRATION!
STREETS SHOULD BE STRAIGHT AND WIDE!

*UNLIKE THE ROMAN COLONIA WHICH WERE BUILT ACCORDING TO A UNIFORM GRID LAYOUT ROME ITSELF WAS BUILT INDISCRIMINATELY AND PIECEMEAL SINCE THE GAULS HAD SACKED THE CITY IN 4TH CENTURY BC, RESULTING IN A CHAOTIC LAYOUT

*PED/PEDES ROMAN FOOT, EQUIVALENT TO 29.6CM; 60 PEDES WOULD BE 17.76 METRES

THE COINAGE VALUE MUST BE CHANGED!

THAT IS WHY,

OF COURSE THEY WON'T!

THESE ARE ALL FINE PROPOSALS, BUT THE COSTS WILL BE IMMENSE.

EVEN WITH DONATIONS, I DO NOT THINK THE COSTS CAN BE MET

I SAY WE REDUCE THE VALUE OF THE GOLD AUREUS AND SILVER DENARIUS BY AROUND 10%!

THE GOLD AND SILVER CONTENT SHOULD BE REDUCED!

ROME'S COINS ARE ALREADY TOO PURE AS IT IS RIGHT NOW!

WELCOME, TIGELLINUS.

AH,

SUGGEST A DEBASEMENT OF CURRENCY?

YOU..

IT IS INEVITABLE THAT THE SUPPLY OF CURRENCY BE INCREASED ONE WAY OR THE OTHER!

YET THE EMPIRE MUST CONTINUE TO GROW AND DEVELOP.

THE AMOUNT OF GOLD AND SILVER IS LIMITED,

IT IS ONLY A RUMOUR.

SHH!

IT WAS ME WHO SET THE FIRE TO ROME?

SOME CITIZENS EVEN CLAIM THEY WITNESSED PEOPLE SETTING BUILDINGS ON FIRE UNDER THE CAESAR'S ORDERS.

I CAN ONLY GUESS IT WAS STARTED BY THOSE WHO BEAR A GRUDGE AGAINST YOU, BUT IT IS SPREADING MORE AND MORE.

EXECUTE ALL THOSE WHO DARE TO SPOUT OFFENSIVE NONSENSE!

THIS IS UNACCE-PTABLE!

OR,

PERHAPS SOME PEOPLE SAW SINISTER MOTIVES UNDERLYING YOUR VALIANT RELIEF EFFORTS,

WHA..

RUMOURS CAN NOT BE PUT OUT SO EASILY..

I'M AFRIAD THAT WILL NOT DO.

AN ABSURD JOKE MADE IN BAD TASTE WAS ACCIDENTALLY TAKEN SER-IOUSLY BY THE THOUGHTLESS...

AGHH!

I NEVER WOULD HAVE EVEN IMAGINED,

THAT THERE ARE THOSE WILLING TO VIEW ME AND MY ACTIONS IN SUCH HEINOUS LIGHT!

.....

AT THIS POINT, WE HAVE NO IDEA WHO STARTED THE RUMOUR.

TRYING TO SUPPRESS IT BY FORCE AT THIS STAGE,

MAY CAUSE IT TO SPREAD EVEN MORE.

AS YOU SHOULD ALREADY KNOW BY NOW.

THE MASSES ARE A FICKLE BUNCH,

IF THEY HAD TO CHOOSE...

I ALWAYS IMAGINED,

THAT THE MASSES WERE ON MY SIDE,

YET BECAUSE THE EVIDENCE IS UNCLEAR, THEY GRASP AT WILDER AND WILDER THEORIES AS TIME GOES ON.

THE MASSES HARBOUR DOUBTS WHETHER THE FIRE WAS MAN-MADE OR NOT,

BY FINDING A PERPE-TRATOR

SO LET US GIVE THEM A CLEAR ANSWER,

OUGHT TO BE FOUGHT BACK WITH RUMOURS.

RUMOURS,

!?

THEY MAY PROFESS LOYALTY TO ROME, BUT SURELY THEY MUST HARBOR RESENTMENT,

AFTER ALL,

IT WAS A ROMAN PREFECT WHO CRUCIFIED THEIR GOD.

IT IS WIDELY KNOWN THAT THE CHRISTIANS CONSTANTLY PREACH OF THE WORLD'S DESTRUC-TION ON JUDGMENT DAY.

ARE THE CHRISTIANS.

THE ONES WHO SET FIRE TO THE CITY,

CONFLICT BETWEEN THEM AND US IS INEVITABLE,

SO WE MIGHT AS WELL MAKE THE BEST USE OF THIS CHANCE.

THE R BELIEFS AND VALUES ARE INCOMPAT-IBLE WITH ROMAN SOCIETY.

AND A MAN CALLED PETROS, SUPPOSEDLY A DISCIPLE OF THEIR PRECIOUS JESUS,

ARE BOTH CURRENTLY IN ROME, IN ORDER TO COMBINE THEIR EFFORTS IN PROSELYTIZING THE MASSES.

THAT EVAN-GELIST BY THE NAME OF PAULUS,

PERSECUTE THE CHRISTIANS.
SO LET US,

WHILE I CANNOT SPEAK AS ELOQUENTLY AS YOU,

PAULUS,

AND HOW HE LIVED.

BUT I BELIEVE IT IS MORE IMPORTANT TO FIRST TEACH THEM CONCRETE FACTS ABOUT WHAT HE DID, WHAT HE PREACHED,

TELLING THEM TO BELIEVE IN HIS RESURRECTION IS IMPORTANT TOO, OF COURSE,

I DO BELIEVE WE MUST FIRST EDUCATE THE PEOPLE MORE ABOUT JESUS.

THAT WOULD LEAVE LITTLE FOR PREACHERS LIKE MYSELF, WHO WERE NOT HIS DISCIPLES DURING HIS LIFETIME, TO TALK ABOUT

MY DEAR KEPHA,!

*KEPHA: HEBREW FOR ROCK. THE NICKNAME GIVEN TO PETER BY JESUS. HIS GREEK NAME "PETROS," ALSO MEANS ROCK

SURELY YOU OF ALL PEOPLE UNDERSTAND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THAT, AS YOU SPOKE AND ATE WITH THE RESURRECTED JESUS, DO YOU NOT?

KEPHA,

FOR ME, THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT TO JESUS WAS THAT HE DIED TO ATONE FOR OUR SINS AND RESURRECTED THREE DAYS AFTER.

THESE TEACHINGS MUST BE SPREAD TO THE PEOPLE AS WELL.

BUT AT THE SAME T ME, I TRAVELLED AND LIVED BY HIS S DE FOR MANY YEARS AND LEARNED MANY THINGS.

YES, I DO.

THE HEARTS OF THE GENTILES WILL NOT BE MOVED BY WHAT SOME MAN PREACHED N THE REMOTE CORNERS OF DISTANT JUDAEA.

BUT,

THAT IS A VALID POINT,

ONLY THEN, WILL THEY COME TO REALIZE THEIR SINS AND THE NEED FOR SALVATION!

SO THAT THEY WILL HAVE A CHANGE OF HEART, JUST AS I DID ON MY WAY TO DAMASCUS!

THUS, WE MUST F RST MAKE THE GENTILES BELIEVE IN HIS MIRACLE!

HOW-EVER!

SO TOO, WERE THE CHRIS-TIANS TOLDER-ATED FOR A TIME!

GENEROUS ROME HAS ACCEPTED PEOPLES OF MANY CULTURES AND RELIGIONS IN HER EMPIRE!

GOOD!

IS THE TRANSCRIP-TION FINISHED YET!?

NOW THAT THEY HAVE DARED TO COMMIT SUCH FOUL CRIMES AGAINST US, WE CANNOT FORGIVE THEM!

THESE CHRIS-TIANS, WHO LOOK DOWN UPON ALL HUMANS AS TAINTED, AND WHO BELIEVE ONLY THEIR BELIEFS TO BE TRUE,

END OF NOTICE!

CAN NO LONGER BE TOL-ERATED,

'N ROME'S SOCIETY!

PAULUS AND PETROS,

THE PREACHERS,

MUST BE ARRESTED!

THE CHRISTIANS MUST BE PUT UNDER IMMEDIATE ARREST!

SEND THIS NOTICE OUT TO THE ENTIRE CITY!

YOU HAVEN'T HEARD?

ANOTHER CASE OF LOOTING IN THE BURNT AREAS?

WHAT ARE THE PRAE-TORIANS MOBILIZ-ING FOR?

APPAR-ENTLY, IT WAS THE CHRIS-TIANS.

THEY'RE OUT TO ARREST THE ARSON-ISTS RESPON-SIBLE FOR THE GREAT FIRE.

ACTE!

AGHH!

WHAT'RE YOU DOING!?

WHAT!? IS THAT TRUE!?

ACTE!

ACTE!

ACTE WENT OUT TO ACCOMPANY PETROS TO THE MEETING HOUSE...

THEY'RE COMPLETELY UNAWARE OF WHAT'S GOING ON!

KEEP QUIET ABOUT THIS, PLEASE.

WHERE'S ACTE!?

THAT HORSE IS FOR CHARIOTEERS!

REMUS! NO!

.....

CAESAR NERO HAS GONE MAD..!

PLEASE SAVE HER!

.....

THE SUCCESS I'VE HAD PROSELYT-IZING IN ROME SO FAR,

IS BECAUSE I EMBRACED THE GENTILES!

THE LOFTY TEACHINGS OF JESUS MUST BE SPREAD TO ALL PEOPLES OF THE WORLD! NOT JUST JEWS!

THE CHURCH OF JERUSALEM AND ITS PREACHERS CLING TOO CLOSELY TO JEWISH PRACTICES!

THUS, WE MUST START WITH TEACH-INGS THAT GENTILES CAN GRASP EASILY!

AND WHERE BETTER TO CARRY OUT THIS MISSION THAN ROME, THE CENTER OF THE WORLD!?

THE PEOPLE OF THIS WORLD MUST REALIZE THEIR SINS AND FEEL REMORSE IF THERE IS TO BE SALVATION!

NERO HAS ISSUED AN ARREST ORDER FOR EVERY CHRISTIAN!

IT'S AN EMER-GENCY!

APOSTLES!

WHAT!?

THERE'S A NEW RUMOUR THAT WE CHRISTIANS WERE THE ONE WHO SET FIRE TO ROME!

RUN AWAY!

THAT CAN'T BE...

THE PRAE-TORIAN GUARDS ARE COM NG!

THEIR M SSION IS TO ARREST YOU ALL!

IF YOU PLAN TO ESCAPE ALONG VIA APPIA, THEN YOU MJST RUN THROUGH PORTA CAPENA BEFORE THEY CLOSE IT!

HURRY!

APOSTLE PETROS!

YOU MUST LEAVE HERE AT ONCE!

THINGS COME TO THIS...?

WHY... DID...

THANK YOU, REMUS,

FOR WARNING US.

KYAAAA!

YOU'RE FOLLOWERS OF THAT PREACHER PAULUS, AREN'T YOU?

BOTH YOU AND YOUR CHILD WILL COME WITH US!

HE'S THE ARONIST!

DON'T LET HIM ESCAPE!

HE'S A CHRISTIAN!

IF THEY RESIST ARREST!

KILL ANY CHRISTIAN ON SPOT.

WHY DID THINGS HAVE TO COME TO THIS? I PREACHED OBEDIENCE TO THE EMPEROR! I PREACHED INDISCRIMINATORY LOVE TO ONE'S NEIGHBOURS! I SUPPORTED MODESTY AND SPOKE OUT AGAINST HATRED AND VIOLENCE! SO WHY...!?

WHY!?

THEY MUST'VE ESCAPED!

THERE'S NO ONE HERE!?

SEARCH THE STREETS!

THEY COULDN'T HAVE GONE FAR YET!

はあ！

はあ！

はあ！

CLOSE PORTA CAPENA AND ALL GATES LEAD NG OUT OF THE CITY!

BLOCK VIAE APPIA AND OSTIA!

STOP FOR A MOMENT, LAD

I SEE.

SOMEONE COMING.

IT'S HIM!

AHH!

WHITHER GOEST THOU?

O' LORD.

LORD!

HE IS COMING!

UU...

OHH...

OHH!

AH-

HOW TRUE YOUR WORD RINGS, LORD.

I AM DEEPLY ASHAMED

NO MATTER HOW OLD THIS KEPHA GETS,

HE IS STILL JUST A FOOL.

!!

PETROS!

WE HAVE TO GET GOING! PURSUERS WILL BE ON THEIR WAY!

I WILL RETURN TO ROME.

NO.

*IN REFERENCE TO GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK, 12:25

ONE BECOMES AS THE ANGELS, WHICH ARE IN HEAVEN...*

WE WERE TAUGHT THAT WHEN ONE RISES FROM THE DEAD,

BUT I CONFESS TO YOU ALL THAT IT WAS A LIE.

AND EVEN SHARED A MEAL WITH HIM.

I HAVE TOLD YOU MANY TIMES THAT THE DISCIPLES, INCLUDING MYSELF, MET WITH THE RESURRECTED JESUS,

DEVOTEES,

THERE IS SOME-THING I MUST APOLGIZE FOR.

I SHOULD HAVE TOLD PAULUS THE TRUTH LONG AGO.

I CAME TO BELIEVE IN MY OWN LIES...

AND THUS,

BIT BY BIT,

BUT WHEN MARY OF MAGDALENE, BELOVED BY JESUS, SAID THE RESURRECTED LORD APPEARED BEFORE HER, IT BECAME UNACCEPTABLE FOR US DISCIPLES TO REMAIN SILENT ON THE MATTER.

"TO ROME."

I SAW HIM WALKING ON THIS ROAD AND I ASKED HIM, "WHITHER GOEST THOU?" AND TO THAT, HE REPLIED,

BUT...

JUST NOW,

I HAVE SEEN OUR LORD JESUS, LIKE AN ANGEL BEFORE ME!

THAT IS WHAT HE REPLIED TO ME.

"I AM GOING TO ROME TO BE CRUCIFIED AGAIN."

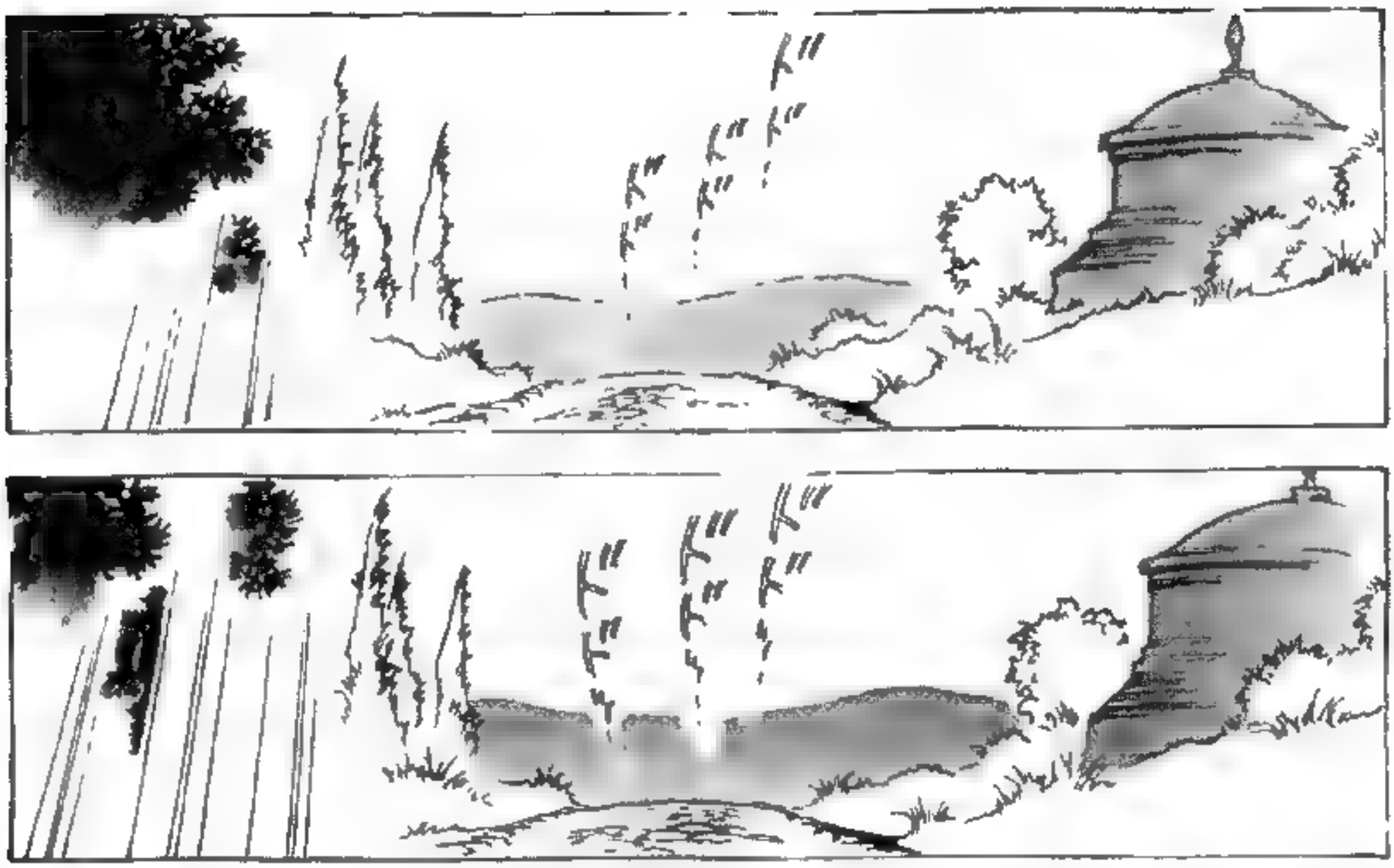
YOUNG DEVOTEES,

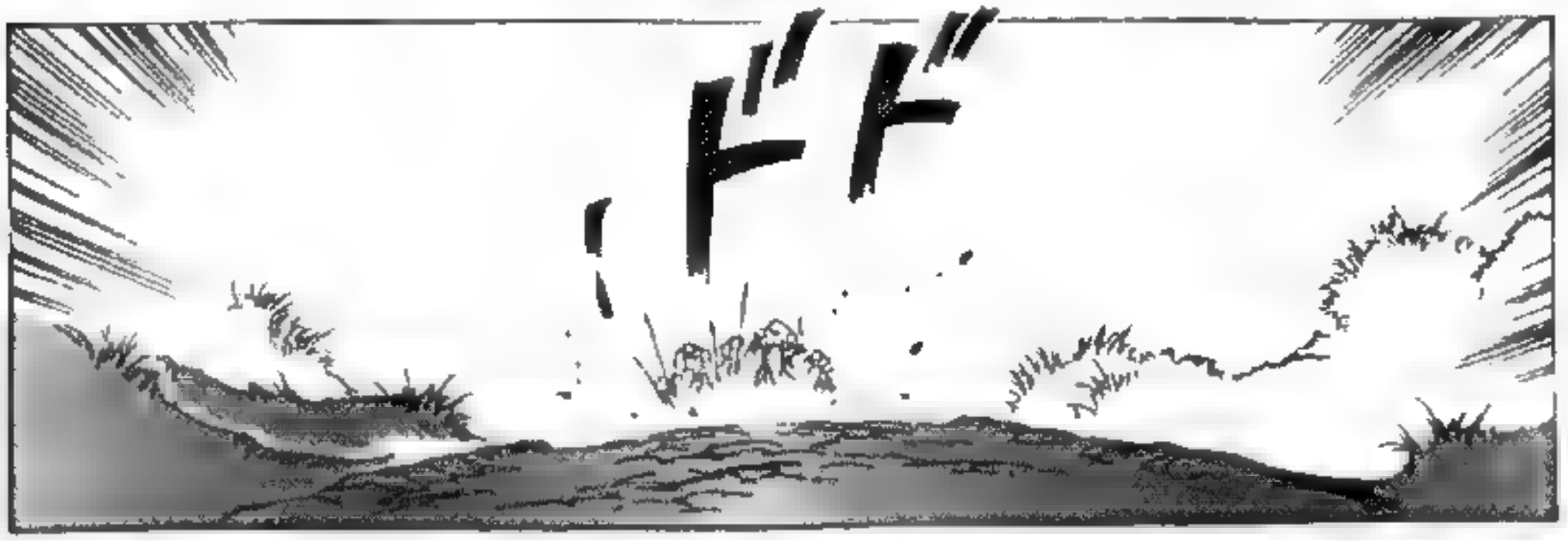
NOW IS NOT THE T ME FOR YOU TO DIE.

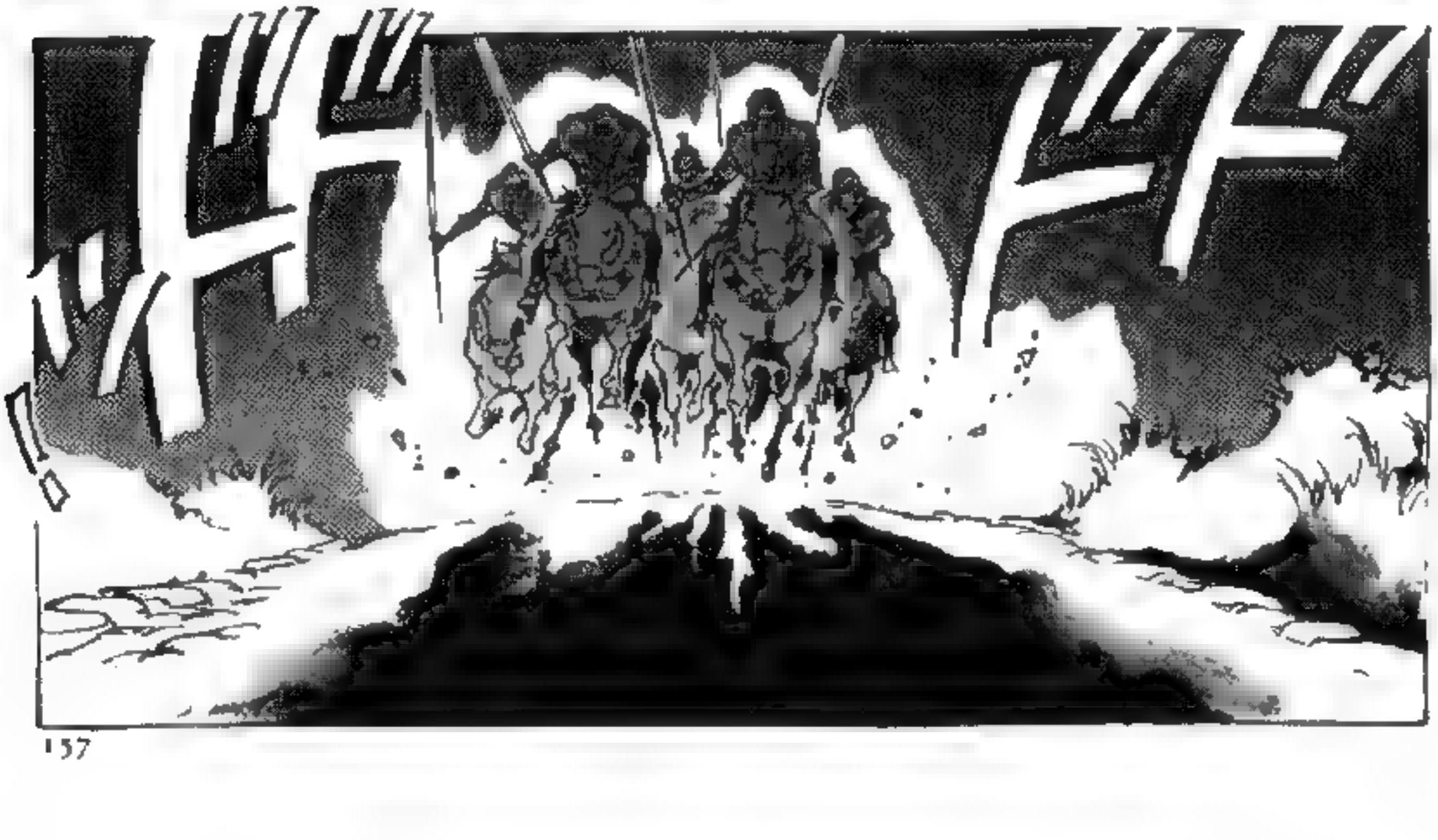
APOSTLE PETROS!

THE LORD DOES NOT WISH SUCH A THING.

GO OUT AND LIVE A WONDER-FUL LIFE.







THERE THEY ARE!

Chapter 14
Slaughter

REMUS!

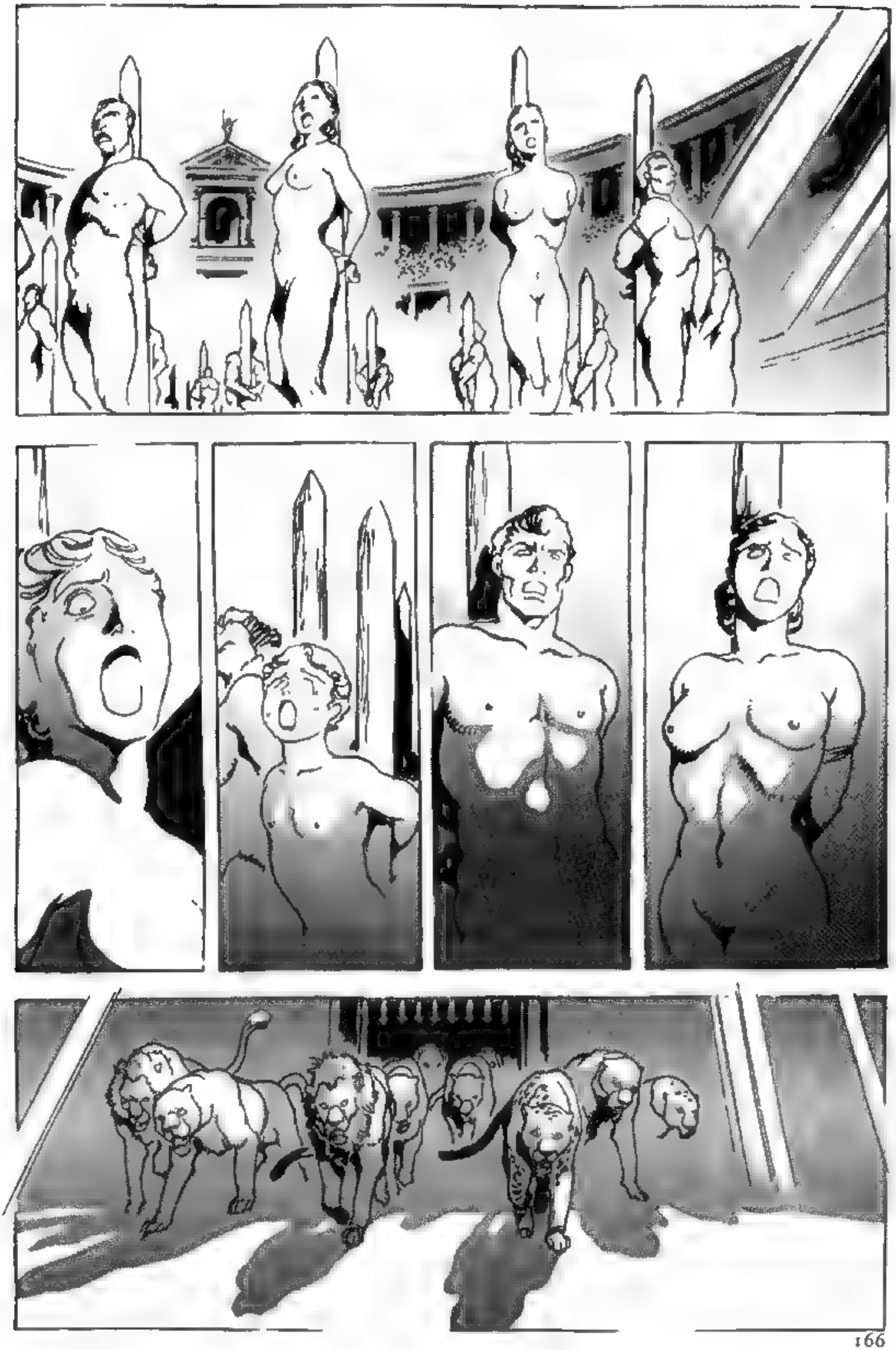
ACTE!

ACTE!

ACT
EEEE!

CAMPUS MARTIUS,
CIRCUS OF NERO

*THE VATICAN AND ST PETER'S BASILICA STANDS WHERE THE CIRCUS OF NERO ONCE STOOD



GAZE UPON THE DESERVING SIGHT OF THESE WRETCHES WHO SOUGHT TO RAZE THE GLORIOUS CITY YOUR FOREFATHERS BUILT!

WHO ENVIED THE FEATS OF YOUR CITY, CURSED ITS FUTURE, AND MADE A MOCKERY OF ITS MORALS!

BEHOLD THE GRISLY FATE OF THESE CHRISTIANS,

LOOK CLOSELY UPON THEM!

FAIR CITIZENS OF ROME!

UWEHH!

URRGH!

NN!

MNF

URP!

THAT DOES NOT EXTEND TO THE PARASITES INFESTING ROME AND HARMING HER CITIZENS!

WHILE I HAVE SWORN TO A POLICY OF CLEMENCY AND BENEVOLENCE EVEN TO SLAVES AND ENEMIES OF THE STATE,

CITIZENS!

I HAND OUT TO THESE FOUL ARSONISTS!

SO RELISH THE SIGHT!

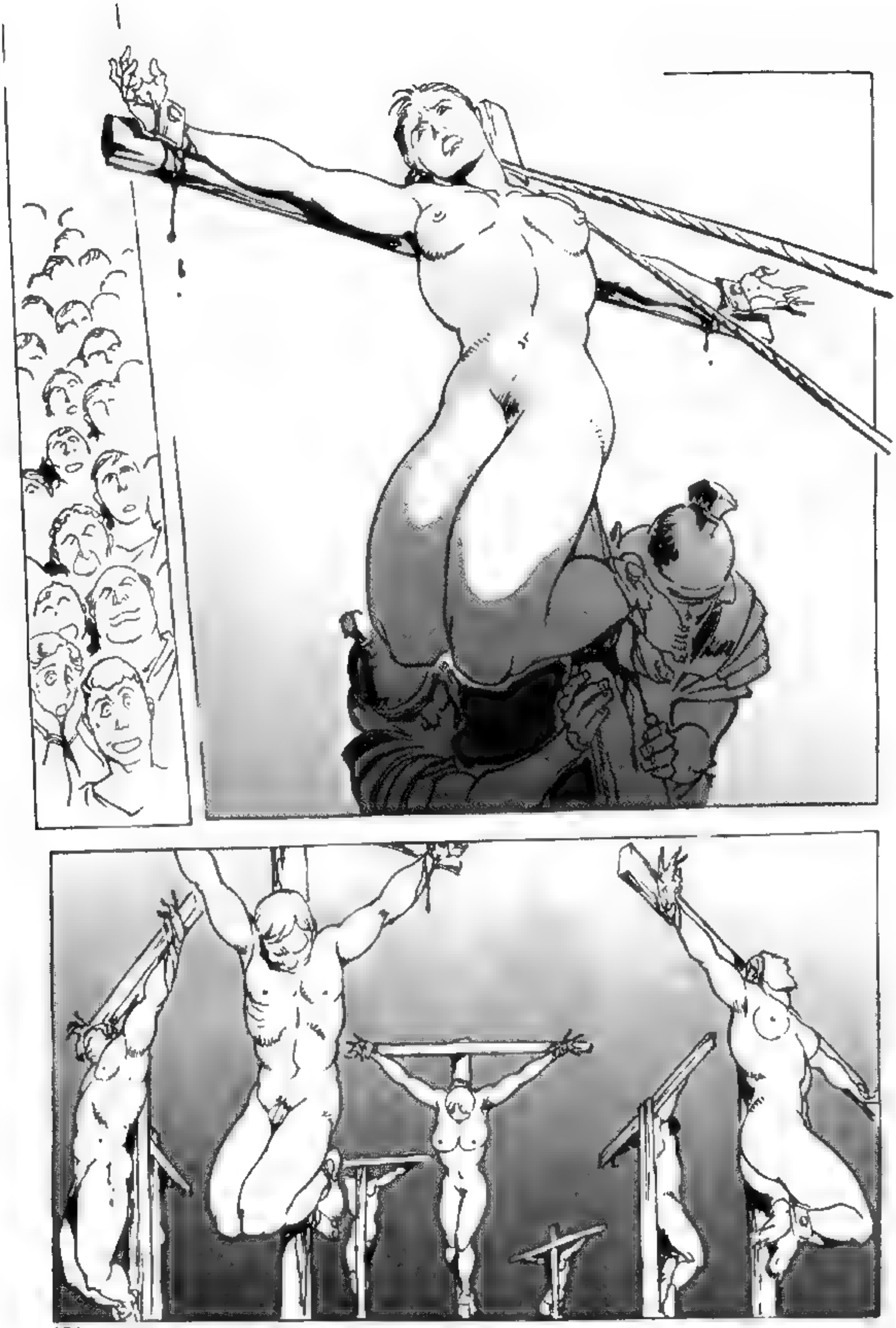
BEHOLD THE PUNISHMENT,

DO IT...

KILL THEM!

THIS MUCH SHOCK AND GORE MUST NOT BE ENOUGH FOR THEM...

THE MASSES ARE NOT AS ROUSED AS I HAD ANTICIPATED...



BACK AWAY!

KEEP OUT!

DO NOT APPROACH ANY CLOSER!

あああ

WHAT A WASTE OF THE LOVELY AUGUSTIAN UNIFORMS.

OH MY, HOW RAGGED YOUR CLOTHES ARE.

WHERE MIGHT YOU BE HEADED?

HELLO, REMUS!

OUR BELOVED ARTIST-CAESAR AND YOUR PATRON?

NERO?

OH.

HERE AT THE CIRCUS!?

IS HE,

I'M LOOKING FOR NERO.

HMM ..

HAS LOST HIS MIND!

NERO..

FOR WHAT PURPOSE DO YOU SEEK HIM OUT,

THESE HORRIFIC ATROCITIES!

I'M GOING TO MAKE HIM STOP,

WITH THAT BROODING EXPRESSION?

EVEN AN ORDINARY PERSON WOULD RECOIL AT THE EXTRAORDINARY BLOODBATH PRESENTED TODAY

IT HASN'T EVEN A SPECK OF ARTISTIC VALUE.

WELL,

HE DETESTS SEEING BLOOD OF ALL THINGS.

I TOLD YOU BEFORE, DID I NOT?

IN ANY CASE,

NERO IS NOT HERE, UNFORTU-NATELY FOR YOU.

OH, I WONDER WHETHER HE'D LISTEN TO YOU..

YOU WILL?

THEN COME TO MY HOUSE.

I'M SCHEDULED TO MEET HIM THIS AFTERNOON. IF YOU WISH, YOU CAN JOIN US

I, TOO, HAVE BUSINESS WITH NERO.

HE'S DONE AWAY WITH THE FORMER PALACE ATOP PALATINE HILL,

NERO, TOO, SEEMS TO SHARE A SIMILAR VIEW.

AND PLANS TO BUILD A NEW PALACE AT ANOTHER SITE.

RATHER THAN REBUILD IT, HOWEVER, I'M PLANNING ON USING IT AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO MOVE.

I DON'T KNOW IF I SHOULD CONSIDER IT A BLESSING OR DISASTER, BUT HALF OF MY HOUSE BURNED DOWN IN THE RECENT FIRE.

THAT'LL RELIEVE YOU OF YOUR CURRENT MENTAL AND PHYSICAL STRESS.

IT'S A SPECIAL VITALITY TONIC,

IT'S GOOD

DRINK!

HOW SPLENDIDLY YOU'VE FALLEN INTO MY TRAP, REMUS.

MY NECK WOULD BE BROKEN BEFORE I COULD HAVE MY WAY WITH YOU

BUT BECAUSE YOU'RE FAR STRONGER THAN ME.

NOT BECAUSE YOU BELONGED TO NERO,

BUT ALAS, I COULD NOT DARE LAY HANDS ON YOU.

I'VE HAD MY EYE ON YOU,

FOR SUCH A LOOONG WHILE.

THE DRUG IS ALREADY TAKING ITS EFFECT

IT'S FUTILE,

SPLENDID~

AHH, A VIRGINAL BODY THAT ALLOWED NOT EVEN NERO TO TOUCH...

MORE-OVER, THERE ISN'T ANYONE ELSE HERE.

YOUR VOICE IS NOW TOO FAINT ANYWAYS.

DON'T SCREAM

!!

AGHHH!

SO THERE'S NO ONE HERE TO INTERFERE.

I'VE DISMISSED ALL MY USELESS SLAVES,

EVEN..

CULTURED,

IT'S QUITE,

OH, GREEK LOVE IS NOT SO BAD.

THE APEX,

OF LOVE..

A WAY TO TRANSCEND THE LAWS OF NATURE.

IT'S A UNIQUELY HUMAN LOVE.

LOVE BETWEEN THE SAME SEX IS FREE OF THE BASER, MORE ANIMALISTIC IMPULSES TO SIMPLY BREED

TO RESENT THAT THOUGHT...

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE NERO,

AND MAKE US DOMINATED BY INCOMPREHENSIBLE FORCES.

EARTHLY DESIRES LIKE GREED AND LUST ARE WHAT MAKE HUMANS HUMAN. TO TREAT THEM AS ABOMINABLE SINS WILL TURN US INHUMAN,

IT'S ONLY NATURAL THAT NERO SAW IN CHRISTIANITY IDEAS MOST FOUL.

NERO IS NO FOOL.

あ"あ"あ"...

AHH, HOW LOVELY YOU ARE...

AWWW...
?
PANT
PANT
PANT

I'M BLEEDING

QUITE A BIT..

BLOOD

JUST DON'T HURT ME ANYMORE!

I'M SORRY!

W-WAIT!

.....

WONDER IF MY SKULL CRACKED..

THIS IS ALMOST AS MUCH BLOOD AS THE TIME MY WRIST WAS CUT

LOOK AT ALL THIS BLOOD

LOOK.

YOU'VE ALREADY HURT ME ENOUGH.

.....

MY HEAD'S FEELING FAINT

UGH, MY...

SORRY TO ASK, BUT,

MIND CALLING A DOCTOR HERE FOR ME...?

SO...

I GUESS YOU'RE LEAVING THEN

NO NEED TO GET ANGRY

I-IT WAS JUST A JEST

HAHA,

HELLO? ANYONE?

HMM...

IN THE END, I'M JUST A FLATTERER TO A VULGAR ARTIST

OH WELL, THAT'S FINE.

THE WORLD WON'T MISS ME EVEN IF I WERE TO DIE...

TO BE SENTENCED TO THE SAME FATE AS YOUR LORD!?

HOW DOES IT FEEL,

PETROS!

IT SHOULDN'T!

NOT AS GLAMOROUS AS YOU EXPECTED!?

AS IF A MAN CAN ATONE FOR THE WHOLE OF HUMANITY'S SINS BY SUCH A MUNDANE EXECUTION!

ALL MANNER OF PEOPLE INCLUDING THIEVES AND SLAVES ARE CRUCIFED!

HOW ABSURD!

GO ON AND ON ABOUT JESUS' DEATH BY CRUCI-FIXION, AS IF IT WERE SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY,

YOU CHRISTIANS,

BUT IT'S NOTHING MORE THAN A MUNDANE, CUSTOMARY EXECUTION METHOD IN ROME!

RATHER, REJOICE AT THE SUFFERING YOU RECEIVE IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHR ST...

MY FELOW CHRISTIANS. FEAR NOT THE FLAMES OF TRIBULATION WHICH ENGULF US NOW.

WILL BE BLESSED BY HIM

.....

FOR THOSE WHO ENDURE SUFFERING IN THE NAME OF THE LORD,

HOW DO YOU PLAN TO ASCEND TO THE HEAVENS FROM THERE!?

WILL YOU SPROUT WINGS!? OR SOMEHOW PULL OUT THOSE NAILS!?

NOW!

SHOW ME A RESURRECTION!

SHOW ME IF YOU CAN!

ACTE...?

ACTE...?

IS THAT YOU,

ACTE!?

ACTE!?

HEY!

STAND BACK!

WHO THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU ARE!?

IF SO, ARE YOU A CHRISTIAN TOO?

WE'LL GLADLY MAKE A HUMAN LAMP OUTTA YOU TOO.

KEEP'EM BURNING BRIGHTLY 'TIL MORNING!

KEEP'EM WELL LIT, MEN!

THESE HUMAN LAMPS WILL KEEP THE STREETS BRIGHTLY LIT!

IT'S THE CAESAR'S OWN IDEA!

WASN'T ACTE...

THAT...

WHERE IS SHE...?

THEN...

WHICH ONE...
JUST...

JUST WHICH, IS ACTE!?

DERANGED!

ROME WAS...

ROTTEN!

DOWN TO ITS VERY CORE!

Chapter 15
My Name is Nero

WHAT AWAITED RUNAWAY SLAVES IF CAUGHT.

I KNEW,

I DID NOT WANT TO STAY EVEN A MOMENT LONGER,

N THAT REPULSIVE CITY!

MOREOVER, MY MASTER WAS NERO.

NO MATTER WHERE I COULD RUN TO N THE ENTIRE EMPIRE,

HE COULD FIND ME IF HE REALLY WISHED

NERO DESTROYING HIMSELF.

BUT I COULD NO LONGER STAND TO SEE,

I LEFT FOR THE PORT AT OSTIA, TO WORK AS A CARGO TRANSPORT WORKMAN.

WAS TO GO TO THE EAST.

MY PLAN,

CURRENTLY IN CONFLICT WITH CORBULO'S LEGIONS.

THERE, I WOULD JOIN UP WITH THE ARMENIANS,

AGAINST DOM TIUS CORBULO, THE STRONGEST MAN IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE.

I WISHED TO FIGHT,

I WAITED FOR A CHANCE TO STOW ABOARD A SHIP IN-SECRET.

WHILE LOADNG AND UNLOADING CARGO,

THE PEACE TERMS STATED THAT ROME WOULD RECOGNIZE TIRIDATES, BROTHER OF THE PARTHIAN SHAHANSHAH, AS THE LEGITIMATE KING OF ARMENIA AS LONG AS HE WAS CROWNED BY THE ROMAN EMPEROR.

THE ARMENIANS DID NOT WAIT FOR ME.

IN LIGHT OF CORBULO'S DETERMINED ATTACKS, THE PARTHIAN SHAHANSHAH DECIDED TO NEGOTIATE PEACE.

HOWEVER...

SURELY, NERO COULDN'T HAVE BEEN HAPPIER TO PLAY HIS PART IN THE CORONATION CEREMONY, WHICH HUMBLED THE MIGHT OF PARTHIA, ROME'S ETERNAL RIVAL.

I REFUSED TO GIVE UP.

THOUGH MY DREAMS HAD COME TO NAUGHT,

I THUS DECIDED TO GO TO ANTIOCHIA AND ASSASSINATE HIM.

WITH THE RESOLUTION OF THE ARMENIAN PROBLEM, CORBULO WOULD RETURN TO ANTIOCHIA TO RESUME HIS POST AS THE GOVERNOR OF SYRIA.

THAN TO BECOME AN ASSASSIN.

THAT THERE WAS NO OTHER PATH IN LIFE OPEN FOR ME,

I MADE MYSELF BELIEVE,

I LIVED ONLY FOR REVENGE.

LIKE THE JUDAEAN ZEALOTS,

IT WAS SUPPOSED TO TAKE ME ALL THE WAY TO CYPRUS, BUT...

EVENTUALLY, I MANAGED TO STOW ABOARD A SHIP SAILING FOR THE EAST.

*ZEALOTS WERE A JUDAEAN POLITICAL FACTION WHICH MOST STRONGLY ADVOCATED ARMED RESISTANCE AGAINST ROME

AND I WAS BOOTED OFF AT CORINTHOS,

TO BE SOLD AS A SLAVE WORKER.

THE SHIP'S CREW DISCOVERED THE TRUTH ABOUT ME,

THE WORK THERE WAS HORRID.

THE CONSTRUCTION PROJECT WE SLAVES WERE ASSIGNED TO WAS TO DIG A CANAL CUTTING ACROSS THE NARROW ISTHMUS OF CORITNHOS.

IT WAS THE TYPE OF GRAND PROJECT THAT ONLY A WHIMSICAL, HELLENOPHILE LIKE NERO COULD COME UP WITH.

I ENDED UP IN GREECE, ONLY TO BE A SLAVE-WORKER FOR NERO'S PET PROJECT.

WHAT BITTER IRONY IT WAS. IN TRYING TO GET FAR AWAY FROM NERO,

WE WERE TREATED NO BETTER THAN CATTLE AND HORSES.

WE WORKED OURSELVES TO EXHAUSTION IN THE DAY, AND SLEPT IN PIT-LIKE SHACKS IN THE NIGHT

BUT EVEN AT SUCH A WRETCHED PLACE, RUMOURS OF THE LATEST ONGOINGS IN ROME CREPT THEIR WAY INSIDE.

TRIED TO ORGANIZE A PLOT TO ASSASSINATE NERO, WHO WAS ALERTED TO IT BEFORE IT WAS CARRIED OUT.

APPARENTLY SOME NOBLEMAN BY THE NAME OF PISO,

THERE, I HEARD WORD OF A MASSIVE CONSPIRACY THAT HAD TRANSPIRED.

SENECA'S NAME WAS INCLUDED IN THIS LIST OF THE CONVICTED.

MANY NOBLES AND LEADING MEMBERS OF THE SENATE WERE IMPLICATED AND EXECUTED IN CONSEQUENCE.

WITHOUT IT, AN EMPIRE CANNOT LAST!

A RULER MUST POSSESS A NATURE OF BENEVOLENCE AND CLEMENCY!

AND JUST HOW MANY MILLION SESTERTII HAVE YOU EMBEZZLED BY MAKING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR AUTHORITY, ALL THE WHILE PREACHING FOR MODERATION!?

YOU MUST USE REASON TO SUPPRESS YOUR URGES!

YOU MAY PREACH SUCH LOFTY IDEALS, BUT WHAT YOU TAUGHT ME WAS HOW TO READ BETWEEN THE LINES, MAINTAIN A FORCE OF PERSONALITY, AND EXECUTE RETRIBUTION.

YOU LIE, SENECA!

I'LL HAVE YOU TORN, LIMB FROM LIMB!

HYPOCRITE! DIE WITH THE CHRISTIANS!

PLEASE STOP, NERO!

NO!

NO!!

SOUNDED LIKE ONE HELL OF A NIGHTMARE.
.....
WHAT THE HELL...
WELL?
AND WHO'S THIS NERO?
JUST WHAT'RE YOU SCREAM-ING "STOP" FOR IN YOUR SLEEP?

CAESAR NERO.
IT'S..
SEEMS LIKE THIS GUY WAS AN ACQUAINT-ANCE OF THE CAESAR!
HEH HEH! DID YA'LL HEAR THAT?

OH, SO YOU WANT A FIGHT, DO YA!?

BASTARD!

WHAT'S GOING ON?

AH!

AND ASSEMBLE HERE AT ONCE!

STOP WORK,

AND GET OVER HERE ALREADY!

STOP MUMB-L.NG,

BEATS ME

WHAT'S 'GOING' ON?

HE'S HERE N GREECE R GHT NOW?

NERO!?

YOU ARE TO SHOW HIM RESPECT!

THE ROMAN IMPERATOR HIMSELF IS COMING TO INSPECT THE CONSTRUC-TION!

IT WAS ONLY LATER,

THAT I LEARNED NERO HAD VISITED H S LONG-CHERISHED GREECE AT LAST TO TAKE PART IN VARIOUS ATHLETIC AND ART STIC COMPETITIONS...

I IMAGINED HE COULD NOT CARE LESS ABOUT TROUBLESOME MATTERS OF POLITICS IN ROME BY THIS POINT.

HE HAD TAKEN A LIKING TO CORINTHOS AND SCHEDULED AN EXTENDED STAY THERE.

CORBULO WAS KILLED!?

I HEAR THE GUY WHO REPLACED CORBULO AS GOVERNOR OF SYRIA GOT HIS SHIT PUSHED IN BY JUDAEAN REBELS

I CAN HARDLY BELIEVE HE JUST KILLED OFF,

ROME'S BEST GENERAL LIKE THAT

NERO'S COM-PLETELY GONE OFF THE EDGE NOW.

YEAH.

APPARENTLY HE WAS RECALLED FROM SYR A ON CHARGES OF PLOTTING TREASON.

HE HAD HIS WRISTS SLIT

THAT IS MY POWER.

DO NOT BELITTLE IT.

TO HAVE CORBULO SLIT HIS WRISTS?

REMUS,

WOULD YOU LIKE ME,

IS DEAD...

CORBULO...

MY ONLY REASON FOR LIVING...

GONE BEFORE I EVEN HAD A CHANCE TO KILL HIM...

AND BEFORE I REALIZED IT, I WAS A HIGHWAYMAN ON VIA APPIA.

HAVING LOST ALL PURPOSE IN LIFE, I ESCAPED FROM THE CONSTRUCTION SITE AT CORINTHOS,

EVENTUALLY, THERE AROSE A REVOLT IN GALLIA.

IN NERO'S LONG ABSENCE FROM ROME, THE GOVERNMENT HAD BECOME DISORDERED AND THE PEOPLE DISCONTENT.

IN TURN, GALBA, THE GOVERNOR OF HISPANIA TARRACONENSIS ALSO RAISED HIS FLAG IN REBELLION.

I SLOWLY MADE MY WAY TOWARDS ROME.

AS FOR ME,

TO PERHAPS WITNESS NERO'S IGNOMINIOUS END...

AND AFTER 4 LONG YEARS,

I FINALLY RETURNED TO THE CITY,

17

MATRICIDE! FRATRCIDE! LUNATIC!

COME ON OUT, NERO!

LEECH OF THE STATE TREASURY!

GIVE US BREAD!

WE NEED FLOUR!

HOW DARE YOU WASTE MONEY ON THIS ENORMOUS NEW PALACE IN THE MIDDLE OF ROME!

YOU PROBABLY RIGGED THE COMPETITION!

WHO CARES IF YOU WON IN THE OLYMPIC GAMES!?

I'M SICK OF YOUR SONGS!

DIE, NERO!

HAIL GALBA!

COLOSSUS NERONIS, MY ASS!

PULL IT DOWN!

THIS STATUE DOESN'T LOOK ONE BIT LIKE YOU!

KILL! KILL! KILL!

I DIDN'T WANT TO COME BACK TO ROME!

THIS IS EXACTLY WHY.

DAMN PLEBS ALWAYS ASKING FOR [redacted] HANDOUTS OF GRAIN!

HMPH!

WILL SECURITY BE ALRIGHT?

TIGELLINUS!

EVIDENTLY SO.

WELL...

TO TRANSPORT WRESTLING SAND?

YOU THINK IT WAS A BAD IDEA TO REQUISITION GRAIN TRANSPORT SHIPS FROM EGYPT,

UM, WELL...

HOW ARE THE SENATORS RESPONDING?

TELL ME,

FOR THE NEXT GAME NO MATTER WHAT...

THEY SEEM TO SUPPORT GALBA.

THE PUBLIC'S OPINION, TOO, HAS ALREADY SWUNG THAT WAY...

OH, BUT I NEEDED THAT PURE WHITE SAND,

I'M AFRAID NERO'S REIGN IS.

I ALSO HEAR THAT GALBA OFFERED A GREAT DONATIVE TO THE SOLDIERS TO BUY THEIR LOYALTY

IT SEEMS HE WAS BIDING HIS TIME FOR A CHANCE LIKE THIS.

IN LUSITANIA, OTHO HAS ALSO JOINED GALBA'S REVOLT.

!?

THE MONEY FROM THAT CAN BE USED TO BUY GRAIN AND-

I'LL CONFISCATE HIS ESTATE AND SELL IT!

SINCE GALBA IS AN ENEMY OF THE STATE,

THAT'S IT!

ARE YOU THERE!?

TIGELLINUS!

TIGELLINUS?

WHERE'D HE GO?

?

WHERE ARE YOU!?

TIGELLINUS!

ANYONE THERE?

POPPAEA!

HOW DULL.

I WAS TOO DRUNK THAT TIME,

I'M SORRY IT WAS MY FAULT..

POPPAEA,

WHY DID YOU DIE SO SOON?

WHEN YOU TOUCHED MY NERVE.

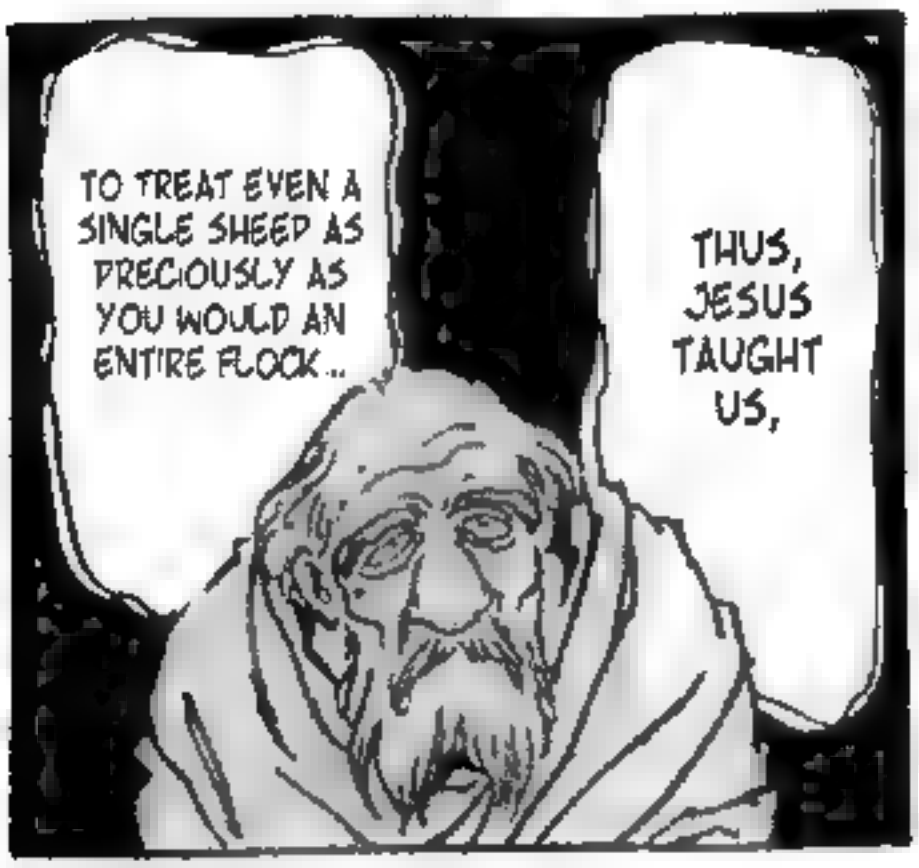
I COULD NOT CONTROL MY TEMPER..

EVEN THOUGH MY NEW PALACE,

THE DOMUS AUREA, IS FINALLY BUILT, THERE ISN'T ANYONE HERE..

'AUGUSTA WAS NERO AND POPPAEA'S DAUGHTER. SHE DIED 3 MONTHS AFTER BIRTH FROM ILLNESS.

BUT AUGUSTA,
POPPAEA, AND OUR SECOND CHILD ARE ALL FOREVER GONE...
OH, POPPAEA!
I TRULY LOVED YOU!
TO THINK THAT YOU WOULD DIE WHILE CARRYING OUR UNBORN SECOND CHILD... WHAT A HIDEOUS CRIME I COMMITTED...



SEE FOR YOURSELF

OF COURSE.

WHAT DOES,

A NAIL MARK OR TWO MATTER!?

HM?

WAIT

WAS SOME-THING I COULD NOT COMPRE-

EVEN I CAN COME TO UNDER-STAND

THAT IS THE KIND OF TALK,

DO YOU STILL HAVE THE NAIL MARK ON YOU THEN?

ARE YOU HERE BECAUSE YOU RESUR-RECTED?

BUT PAULUS' TALK OF SIN AND RESURREC-TION,

I SHOULD HAVE TRIED TALKING TO YOU MORE BEFORE...

YOU'VE BECOME UNABLE TO DISTINGUISH FANTASY FROM REALITY

IT'S SIMPLY YOUR DELUSION.

BUT IT'S FINE. IN FACT, IT FEELS GREAT,

BEING FREE FROM HAVING TO FLATTER YOU ALL THE TIME...

YES,

IT WAS WHAT GOT MY WRISTS SLIT

IT WAS THAT SAME TONGUE OF YOURS THAT GOT YOU-

WATCH YOUR TONGUE, PETRON-IUS

THEY'RE MERE ABSTRACTIONS OF OUR DREAMS. HOW PATHETIC YOU ARE NOW, NERO,

ARE BOTH PURELY IMAGINARY

AND BELIEF, ART,

IF YOU CANNOT DISTIN-GUISH THEM.

THAT I BECAME DISGUSTED AT MY OWN SYCOPHANTIC SELF...

YES, IT WAS AFTER I HAD TRIED TO FORCE MY WAY WITH YOUR SWORN BROTHER REMUS,

AND GOTTEN INJURED,

I BELIEVE IT WAS DURING THE CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION

.....

WHERE DID HE GO TO...?

THAT'S RIGHT... REMUS..

REMUS!

THAT TURNED HIM AWAY.

IT WAS YOUR OWN ACTIONS,

RAN OUT OF PATIENCE WITH YOU

HE, TOO,

IT'S THE SAME WITH THE GENERAL STANDING BEHIND YOU.

LOOK.

IT'S NO WONDER,

YOU WERE ABANDONED BY YOUR LOVED ONES.

FOR ONE WHO DETESTS PAIN AS MUCH AS YOU AND SOUGHT TO SHARE IN ONLY THEIR SWEET MOMENTS,

IN SPITE OF THEIR PLEASANT RING, LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP ARE HEAVY, PAINFUL BURDENS AT TIMES, YOU KNOW.

CORBULO!

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE TRIED TO RUN FROM MEN LIKE CORBULO!
BUT THAT'S MORESO THE REASON,
YOU NEVER KNEW YOUR FATHER OTHER THAN THE FACT HE HAD ABANDONED YOU. AS A RESULT, YOU COULD ONLY HARBOR RESENTMENT FOR HIM.
A REAL PITY.

YOU PERFORMED ADMIRABLY,

PAY NO MIND TO THE RAMBLINGS OF A POET, CAESAR..

HAHA.
IT'S JUST LIKE,
AND YET, HE TOO, WAS FORCED TO COMMIT SUICIDE AT YOUR HANDS.

GROWING MORE AND MORE LIKE YOUR HATED FATHER, DOMITUS AHENOBARBUS!
HOW YOU AVERT YOUR EYES FROM YOUR REPULSIVE OBESE SELF,

OF THE WAR IN ARMENIA.
AS YOU GAVE ME COMMAND,

THEY WILL REMEMBER YOUR NAME FONDLY FOREVER.

THE PEACE WITH PARTHIA YOU USHERED WILL HOLD FOR MANY YEARS.

THE PEOPLE OF ARMENIA AND PARTHIA WILL SURELY RESENT ME ALL THE WAY TO THEIR AFTERLIFE.

BUT FOR YOU, THE ONE WHO NEGOTIATED THE PEACE TREATY...

I MIGHT HAVE RISEN UP AGAINST YOU EVENTUALLY, HAD YOU LET ME LIVE.

AS I WAS A MAN LOYAL TO ROME RATHER THAN THE HOUSE OF CAESAR.

AND DO NOT THINK OF MY DEATH AT YOUR HANDS AS A MISTAKE.

WAIT!

WAIT!

JULIUS CAESAR'S DYNASTY...

WILL END!?

CORBULO!

HE MAY BE OLD, BUT HE'S A SOLID LEADER.

MOST OF ALL, YOUR DECISION TO SEND VESPASIANUS TO JUDAEA WAS WISE.

AND RESTORE ROME WITH HIS OWN DYNASTY,

BEFORE LONG, HE WILL SUPPRESS THE JUDAEAN REVOLT,

DIES WITH YOU...

ONCE THE BLOOD OF JULIUS CAESAR,

NERO!

NERO!

YOU SHOULDN'T BE SLEEPING OUT IN A PLACE LIKE THIS!

PLEASE WAKE UP!

SPORUS!

A FREEDMAN.

I AM PHAON.

AND YOU ARE?

?

SPORUS! SPORUS!

SPORUS!

SPORUS!

AS I AM BUT A LOWLY FINANCE OFFICIAL.

IT'S ONLY NATURAL YOU WOULDN'T REMEMBER ME,

THANK GOODNESS YOU'RE HERE AT LEAST!

I WILL GO AS LONG AS IT IS WILLING TO TAKE ME IN

NO MATTER THE PLACE,

VERY WELL,

THE SITUATION IS DIRE AND RECOMMENDS YOU TAKE TEMPORARY REFUGE AT HIS VILLA

PHAON HERE WOULD LIKE TO SAY,

CAESAR

MY LOYAL SECRETARY

YOU'RE EPAPHRODITOS,

I KNOW YOU THOUGH.

.....

.....

TO FLEE FROM MY CITY?

ARE YOU TELLING ME...

NERO HAS FLED!

JUST PUT IT ON NERO'S TAB, HAHA!

IF THAT'S NO GOOD, THEN ON GALBA'S TAB!

STOP THESE LOOTERS!

GUARDS!

WAIT' TIL I GET A HOLD OF HIM!

FIND HIM!

THE DOMUS AUREA IS EMPTY!

HEY, D D YA HEAR?

THERE'S A REWARD OF ONE MILLION SESTERTII FOR NERO'S HEAD'

HE WAS CAUGHT,

AND PROMPTLY BEHEADED

AND PAULUS?

I NARROWLY ESCAPED BEING CRUCIFIED THAT DAY.

THANKS TO THE FAVOUR OF AN IMPERIAL FREEDMAN BY THE NAME OF PHAON,

RATHER, I CAN ONLY PITY HIS FORTUNES,

I DO NOT BEAR RESENTMENT AGAINST NERO FOR THAT CHAIN OF TRAGIC EVENTS.

I BELIEVE IT WAS THE RAVAGES OF THE GREAT FIRE THAT CAUSED THE WHOLE CITY TO GO MAD, WHICH MADE THE CRUEL PERSECUTION POSSIBLE.

AND I WISH TO SAVE HIM.

YES.

NERO!?

SAVE HIM?

YES!

.....

GOD... AS IN JESUS CHRIST?

IT MUST BE GOD'S WILL THAT WE REUNITED HERE AND NOW!

PLEASE LEND ME YOUR A D!

I COULD BELIEVE THE EX STENCE OF LOVE THAT COULD TRANSCEND HATRED.

I STILL D D NOT BELIEVE IN THE GOD OF THE JEWS OR THE R MESSIAH, BUT UPON LOOKING AT ACTE'S EXPRESSION,

ACTE!

WE WERE WAITING FOR YOU!

REMUS!

BUT I WAS ONLY ABLE TO GET CLOTHING FOR TWO...

YES...

DID YOU MANAGE IT!?

REMUS!

YOU'RE REMUS, AREN'T YOU!?

REMUS!

WHO'S HE?

HA,

WELL...

STICKING WITH NERO 'TIL THE END, ARE YOU?

YOU'RE MORE OF A MAN THAN I THOUGHT

WHAT A SURPRISE

I SEE YOU'VE ALL GROWN UP NOW.

YOU TOO.

SPORUS!?

REMUS!?

ACTE?

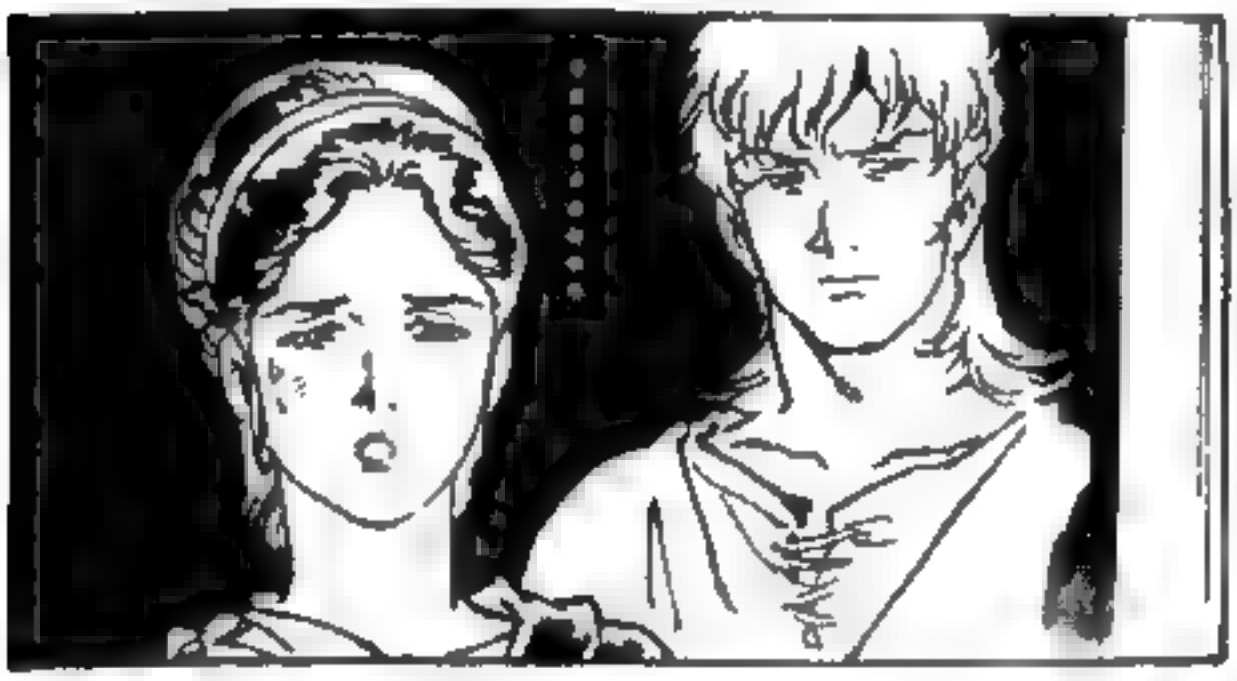
IF SO...

SHOW ME YOUR FACES...

PLEASE,

DID I HEAR YOU CORRECTLY?

ARE ACTE AND REMUS REALLY HERE?



I AM OVER-JOYED
AHH,

COULD THIS PERHAPS BE ANOTHER DREAM?
I'VE BEEN HAVING HALLU-CINA-TIONS AS OF LATE, YOU SEE.
IT'S HARD TO DISTIN-GUISH REALITY FROM DREAMS.

I'M NOT SICK, YOU KNOW.
FEAR NOT.
OH, DON'T MAKE SUCH PAINED EXPRES-SIONS

THAT I RACED AS A CHARIOTEER IN THE OLYMPIC GAMES...

IT WAS ONLY THE YEAR BEFORE,

HOW LOW I'VE FALLEN!..

PITIFUL, ISN'T IT?

FROM RUNNING ALL THE WAY HERE TO THE SUBURBS...

I'M JUST EXHAUSTED...

BEFORE I FALL ASLEEP.

LET ME CONFIRM THAT YOUR PRESENCE IS NO DREAM,

I BEG OF YOU

ACTE,

REMUS,

PLEASE HOLD MY HAND.

I THANK THE GODS...

THAT THIS,

IS NO DREAM.

AH ..

A WARMTH MOST CERTAINLY HUMAN.

THIS WARMTH...

IT'S NO GOOD

MOUNTED SOLDIERS!

ARE THEY SEARCHING FOR ME?

YES,

MOST LIKELY

THEY'VE BLOCKED OFF VIA APPIA.

WAS TO FIRST FLEE TO OSTIA BUT..

MY PLAN,

YOU MUST NOW PREPARE YOUR-SELF

BUT,

FORGIVE ME FOR SAYING THIS, CAESAR,

IT WOULD BE LESS PAINFUL AND DISGRACEFUL THAN TO BE EXECUTED. IN FACT,

YES,

YOU SHOULD DO SO NOW-

ARE YOU TELLING ME TO COMMIT SUICIDE!?

F-FOR WHAT!?

!?

PREPARE MYSELF?

AGHHHH!

YOU ADVISE ME SO ALL OF A SUDDEN-

E-EVEN IF,

WAIT!

THEY WILL FIND YOU.

THE SENATE HAS DECLARED YOU AN ENEMY OF THE STATE. NO MATTER WHERE YOU FLEE,

NO OTHER WAY!?

IS THERE REALLY,

NO, THERE HAS TO BE...

NO-

THERE HAS TO BE SOME-WHERE ELSE I CAN GO...

WELL!? I THOUGHT WE COULD ESCAPE!

TELL ME, PHAON!

CAN'T WE DO THAT!?

WHAT ABOUT THE PLAN TO TAKE A SHIP TO EGYPT?

IT WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE TO EVEN MAKE IT TO OSTIA'S PORT FROM HERE WITHOUT GETTING CAUGHT FIRST.

WHILE THAT MAY BE POSSIBLE,

THE ARMENIAN KING CALLED ME HIS ELDER BROTHER WHEN I CROWNED HIM, DID HE NOT!?

WHAT ABOUT ARMENIA!? EVEN PARTHIA IS FINE!

.....

QUALIS ARTIFEX PEREO!

(WHAT AN ARTIST DIES WITH ME!)

THIS VULGAR END...

NO... THIS END DOES NOT BEFIT ME...

MEANS TO DISGRACE MYSELF FURTHER, THEN... THEN...

BUT IF... TO LIVE ANY LONGER...

COME, NERO! SHOW YOUR COURAGE!

ONE MUST BEAR GRACE AND DIGNITY AT ONE'S END...

SPORUS!

NGHH!

HAS MY FATED TIME COME?

WAIL A LITTLE LOUDER FOR MY SAKE!

YOU REALIZE YOU'RE NOT GOING TO SEE ME AGAIN FOR ETERNITY DON'T YOU!?

JUST HOW PAINFUL AND TERRIFYING THE ACT OF SLITTING ONE'S WRIST IS...

I NEVER REALIZED,

WHAT DOES THAT MAKE YOU ALL THEN!?

BUT EVEN SO!

I'VE SENT SO MANY MEN AND WOMEN TO THEIR PAINFUL DEATHS.

I SUPPOSE IT'S ONLY POETIC JUSTICE THAT I DIE BY THE SWORD AS WELL.

SUFFERED UNBEAR-ABLE PAIN IN HER LAST MOMENTS.

OCTAV A MUST HAVE SURELY,

SIMPLY GOING TO WATCH ME DIE IN SILENCE!?

ARE YOU...

I AM NOT YOUR ENTERTAIN-MENT!

THEN GET OUT!

OR DO YOU SECRETLY BEAR A BURNING HEART OF REVENGE WITHIN AND WILL SMIRK UPON MY DEATH...?

DON'T LEAVE ME ALONE!

PLEASE DON'T GO!

WAIT!

NO-

I JUST DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO...

IT'S JUST...

PLEASE! STAY BY MY SIDE!

I APOLO-GIZE!

I DIDN'T MEAN WHAT I SAID JUST NOW!

SLIT MY WRISTS FOR ME?

WILL ONE OF YOU,

YOU ARE THE LAST OF WHICH ROME LEFT TO ME! YOU ARE MY EVERYTHING!

AND BEFORE I REALIZED IT, MY BODY HAD COME TO A DECISION.

I WAS SIMPLY STRUCK BY AN IDEA,

IT WAS NOT THAT I WAS MOVED BY NERO'S WORDS.

NO, REMUS!

EPAPHRODITOS. AS YOU ARE KNOWN TO MEMBERS OF THE SENATE,

GO AND BRING BACK A MAN MOST TIMID AND COWARDLY TO CONFIRM NERO'S DEATH ON BEHALF OF THE SENATE.

.....

THE SECURITY ON THE ROADS IS SURE TO LOOSEN.

USE THAT OPPOR-TUNITY TO CATCH A SHIP AT OSTIA.

ONCE WORD GETS OUT THAT NERO MET HIS END HERE IN THIS HOUSE,

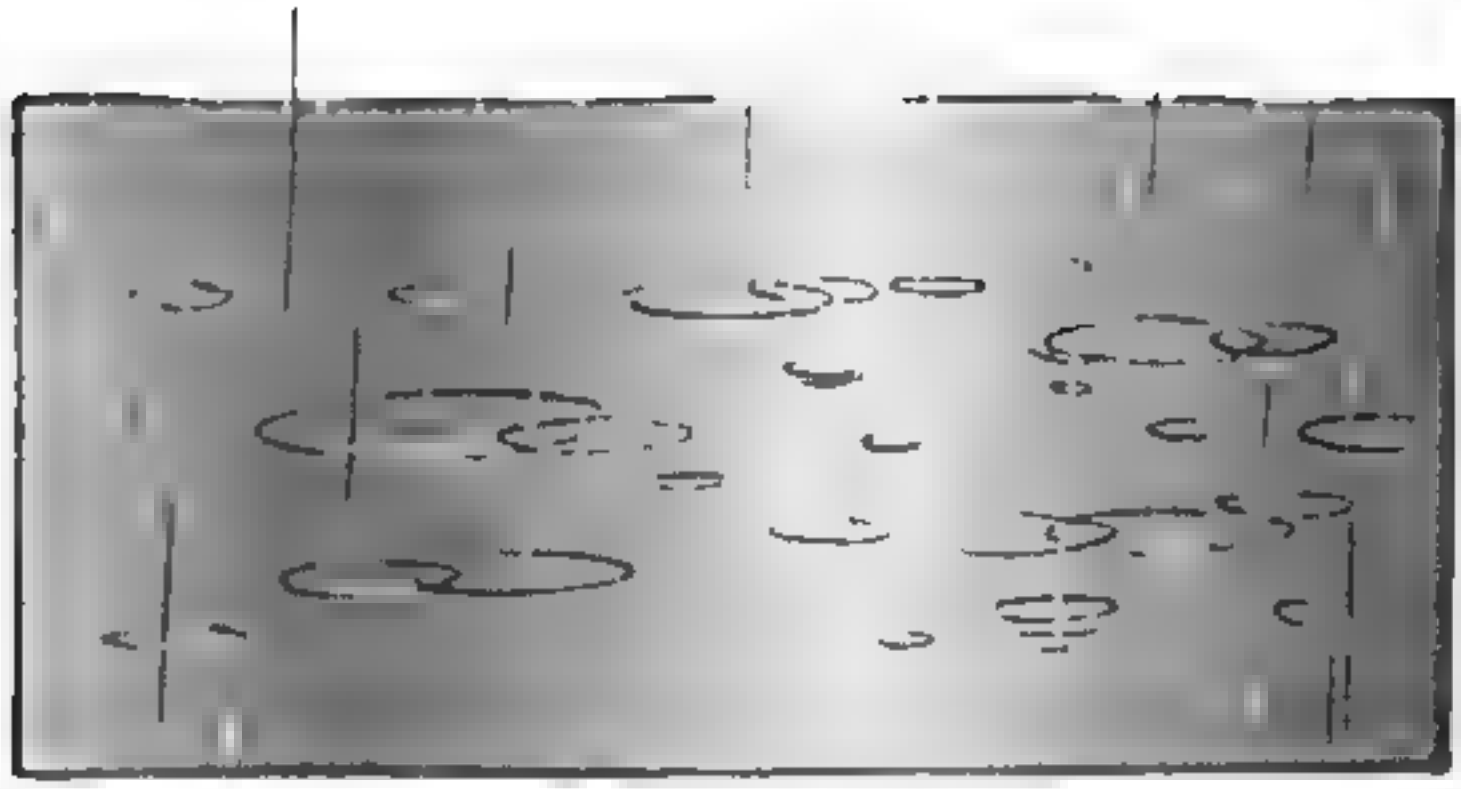
PHAON.

PLEASE TAKE THIS MAN AWAY ON A SHIP AND HIDE HIM SOMEPLACE.

THE SENATE'S OFFICIAL CONFIRMS NERO'S DEATH, BURN MY CORPSE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

AND ONCE,

ACTE, YOU WILL STAY BEHIND HERE AND GRIEVE OVER NERO'S DEATH.



I NEVER ONCE THOUGHT THAT NERO AND I,

WERE ALIKE...

GO TO EGYPT, ARMENIA, OR WHER-EVER,
THERE.
YOU ARE NOW DEAD.
AND BEGIN YOUR LIFE ANEW.
JUST
BE SURE TO NEVER FORGET YOUR EMOTIONS TODAY.

I DOUBT I BORE MUCH RESEMBLANCE.

EVEN AFTER DONNING HIS WROBE AND PLACING HIS GOLDEN WREATH UPON MY HEAD,

AFTER ALL,

HOW CAN A SINGLE DAY OF EXERTION,

MAKE A MAN LOSE SO MUCH WEIGHT...?

...NO,

THAT COULDN'T BE.

PERHAPS I ONLY STAGED A THIRD-RATE PLAY,

TO SERVE AS THE BUTT OF JOKES FOR THE ROMAN PEOPLE...

THE TRUE JOKE HERE,

IS NERO.

MY DEAR ACTE...

FROM WHERE DO ALL THOSE TEARS WELL UP IN YOUR SMALL FRAME?

ACTE IS CRYING FROM THE BOTTOM OF HER HEART, IS SHE NOT?

AFTER ALL,

THOUGH I SUPPOSE SPORUS LOOKED ALRIGHT IN IT...

HOW COMICAL HE LOOKED, DRESSED IN A VESTAL VIRGIN'S GARB DELIVERED BY ACTE.

AND RETURNED A SMILE.

ACTE FINALLY RAISED HER HEAD,

WHEN I REMARKED THAT THERE GOES THE FATTEST VESTAL VIRG N THERE EVER WAS,

THIS IS FINE.

THE ONLY THING LEFT NOW,

IS TO AWAIT MY DEATH...

IS WHETHER OR NOT I'LL D E BEFORE EPAPHRODITOS BRINGS BACK A DOCTOR TO CONFIRM MY DEATH.

THE ONLY REMAIN NG WORRY,

SO THERE'S NO CHANCE THAT THE BLEED NG WILL STOP BEFORE I DIE.

THE CUT WAS DEEP,

IT'D BE BEST IF I COULD SAY ONE LAST LINE APPROPRIATE TO MY PERFORMANCE AS NERO TO THE DOCTOR BEFORE I D E...

IF HE WERE TO ARRIVE TOO EARLY AND TREAT MY WOUNDS, THAT WOULD JEOPARD ZE EVERYTH NG.

BUT IT'D BE DULL TO HAVE HIM ARR VE SO LATE THAT I'M ALREADY LONG DEAD.

MY MIND GREW FAINT AND I DOZED OFF FOR A MOMENT.

AS I LAY THERE TRYING TO THINK OF A MEMORABLE QUOTE,

BUT I DEC DED NOT TO.

HOW PLEASANT IT FELT. IT WAS ALMOST AS IF WE WERE LOVERS...

FOR A BRIEF MOMENT, I THOUGHT I SHOULD TELL HER I LOVE HER,

WHEN I CAME TO,

I SAW ACTE WITH HER EYES CLOSED AND MY HAND UNDER HER CHEEK.

AMONG THE THEATRICAL ARTS, PANTOMIME IS SUPREME.

THOSE WERE NERO'S WORDS.

ALTHOUGH I WAS NOT ONE TO UNDERSTAND NERO'S ART, EVEN I COULD AT LEAST AGREE WITH THAT QUOTE.

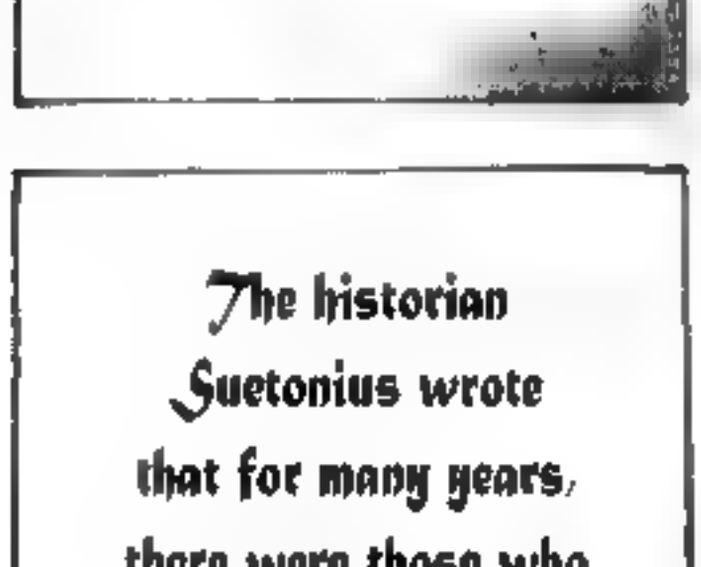
AT LAST, IT'S TIME TO BE CREMATED.

TO BECOME A HEAP OF WHITE ASHES, FREE FROM MALICE AND HATRED...

As requested
Nero's corpse
was quickly
cremated at the
place of his death.

His ashes were deposited by
his nurses and his mistress
Acte, in the family tomb of
the Domitii on Pincian Hill
which overlooks
Campus Martius below.

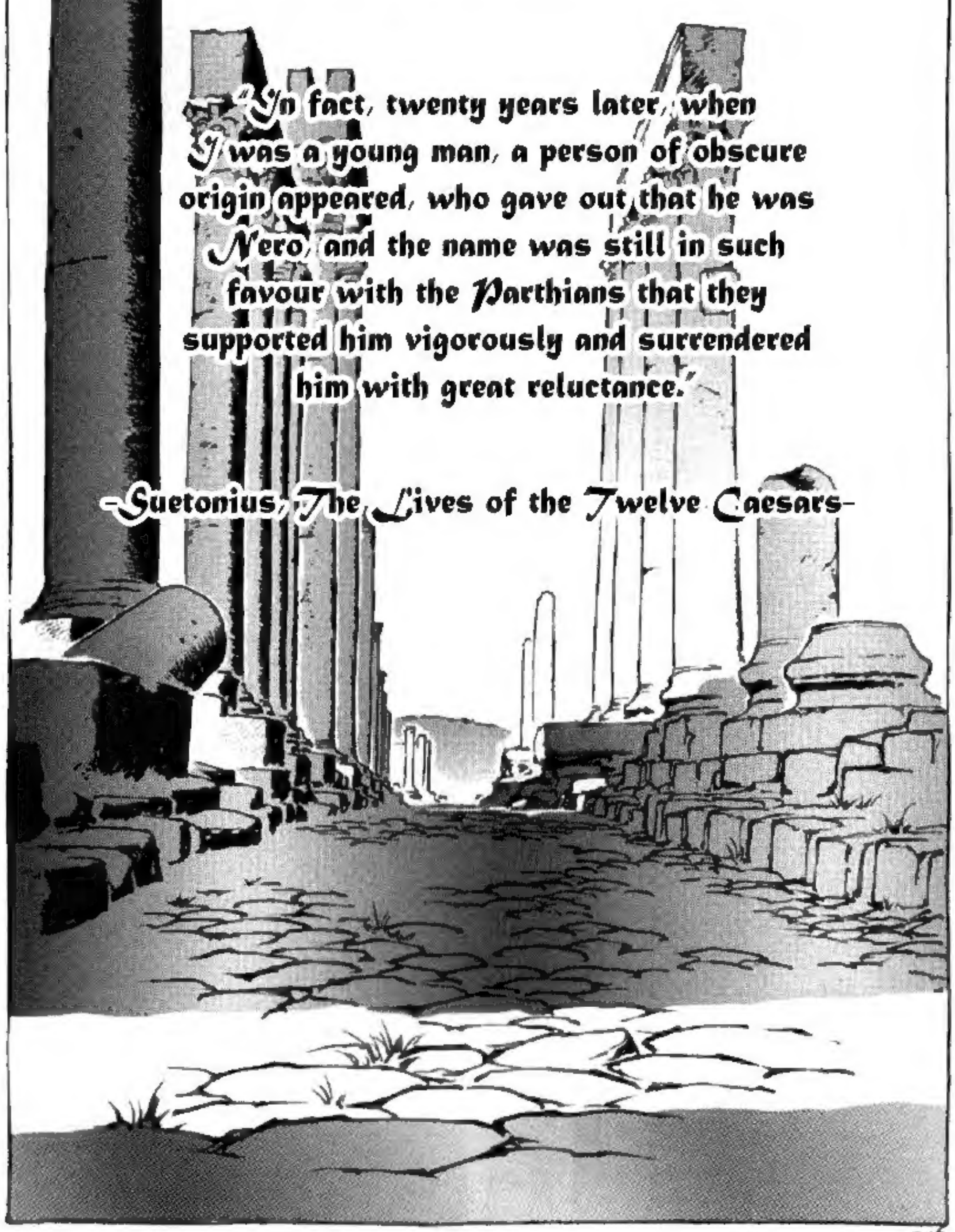
The historian
Suetonius wrote
that for many years,
there were those who
decorated his tomb
with spring and
summer flowers.



Moreover, rumours of Nero's survival persisted and sprang up from time to time, as evidenced by the following passage.

"In fact, twenty years later, when I was a young man, a person of obscure origin appeared, who gave out that he was Nero, and the name was still in such favour with the Parthians that they supported him vigorously and surrendered him with great reluctance."

-Suetonius, The Lives of the Twelve Caesars-

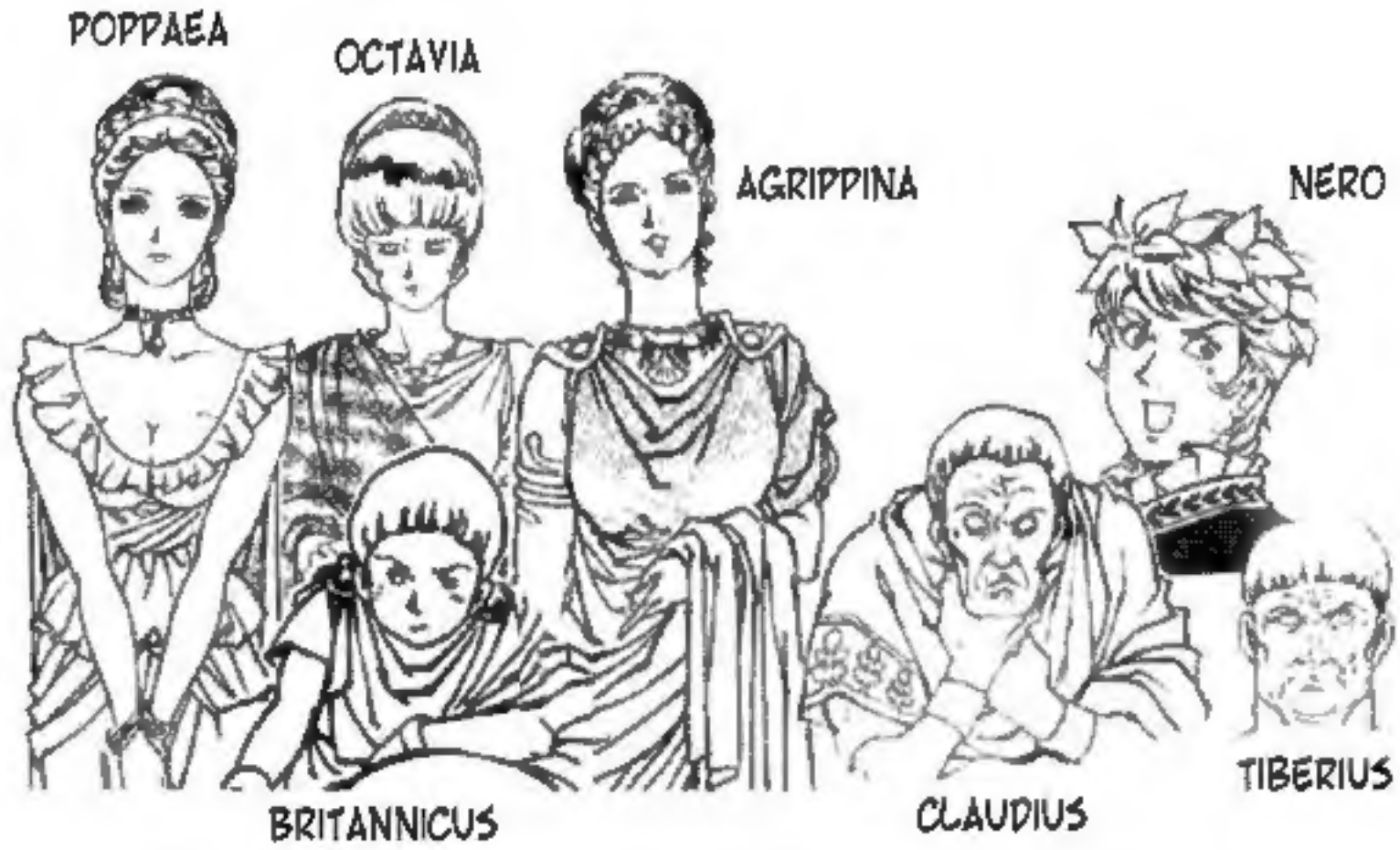


-End-

Chronicle of events during the Julio-Claudian dynasty

BC
31 OCTAVIAN DEFEATS MARK ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA AT THE BATTLE OF ACTIUM
27 OCTAVIAN IS TITLED "AUGUSTUS" BY THE SENATE AND BECOMES THE FIRST ROMAN EMPEROR

AD
14 TIBERIUS SUCCEEDS AUGUSTUS AS THE NEW EMPEROR AFTER THE LATTER'S DEATH
30 PREFECT PONTIUS PILATE ORDERS JESUS TO BE CRUCIFIED
37 TIBERIUS DIES AT THE AGE OF 77. CALIGULA BECOMES EMPEROR. NERO IS BORN AT ANTIUM (DEC. 15TH)
41 CALIGULA IS ASSASSINATED. CLAUDIUS BECOMES EMPEROR.
49 CLAUDIUS MARRIES AGRIPPINA (NERO'S MOTHER)
50 CLAUDIUS ADOPTS NERO AS HIS SON
53 NERO MARRIES OCTAVIA
54 CLAUDIUS IS ASSASSINATED AND NERO BECOMES EMPEROR
55 BRITANNICUS IS ASSASSINATED
58 CORBULO INVADES ARMENIA
59 AGRIPPINA IS ASSASSINATED
60 PAUL THE APOSTLE PROSELYTIZES CITIZENS OF ROME. THE FIRST EVER NERONIA IS HELD.
62 NERO DIVORCES OCTAVIA AND MARRIES POPPAEA. OCTAVIA IS FORCED TO COMMIT SUICIDE. PRAETORIAN PREFECT BURRUS DIES.
63 POPPAEA GIVES BIRTH TO NERO'S DAUGHTER, AUGUSTA. THE BABY, HOWEVER, DIES JUST 3 MONTHS LATER IN APRIL.



64 NERO MAKES HIS FIRST PUBLIC PERFORMANCE AS A SINGER AT NAPLES.
THE GREAT FIRE OF ROME (JULY 19TH). SAINT PETER IS CRUCIFIED. PAUL THE APOSTLE IS BEHEADED.

65 POPPAEA BECOMES PREGNANT BUT DIES, POSSIBLY FROM NERO ALLEGEDLY KICKING HER.
PISONIAN CONSPIRACY (PLOT TO ASSASSINATE NERO) IS UNCOVERED. SENECA IS FORCED TO COMMIT SUICIDE AFTER BEING IMPLICATED IN THE CONSPIRACY.

66 PETRONIUS AND CORBULO ARE FORCED TO COMMIT SUICIDE. THE GREAT JEWISH REVOLT BREAKS OUT IN JUDAEA AND AN ENTIRE LEGION IS KILLED AT THE BATTLE OF BETH HORON. NERO SENDS VESPASIAN TO SUPPRESS THE REVOLT.
67 NERO VISITS GREECE AND PARTICIPATES IN THE OLYMPIC GAMES.
68 VINDEX, GOVERNOR OF GALLIA LUGDUNENSIS (NORTHERN/CENTRAL FRANCE), REBELS AGAINST NERO (MARCH). GALBA, GOVERNOR OF HISPANIA TARRACONENSIS (SPAIN), JOINS THE REBELLION AND PROCLAIMS HIMSELF EMPEROR (APRIL). SENATE RECOGNIZES GALBA AS THE NEW EMPEROR.
NERO COMMITS SUICIDE (JUNE 9TH). GALBA ARRIVES IN ROME (OCTOBER).

69 THE ARMY OF GERMANIA INFERIOR PROCLAIMS ITS COMMANDER, VITELLIUS, AS EMPEROR. OTHO DEPOSES GALBA AND BECOMES THE NEW EMPEROR.
OTHO'S TROOPS ARE DEFEATED AT THE FIRST BATTLE OF BEDRIACUM (APRIL). OTHO COMMITS SUICIDE AND VITELLIUS BECOMES THE NEW EMPEROR.
WHILE SUPPRESSING THE GREAT JEWISH REVOLT, VESPASIAN IS PROCLAIMED EMPEROR AT ALEXANDRIA WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE EASTERN LEGIONS (JULY).
VESPASIAN'S TROOPS DEFEAT VITELLIUS' TROOPS AT THE SECOND BATTLE OF BEDRIACUM. SENATE DECLARES VESPASIAN AS NEW EMPEROR (DECEMBER).

70 TITUS, ELDEST SON OF VESPASIAN, BESIEGES AND CAPTURES JERUSALEM, RESULTING IN THE DESTRUCTION OF THE SECOND TEMPLE (SEPTEMBER). VESPASIAN ENTERS ROME (OCTOBER).
79 VEPASIAN DIES AND HIS SON, TITUS, BECOMES EMEPROR.
80 TITUS BUILDS THE FLAVIAN AMPHITHEATRE (COLOSSEUM) ON THE SPOT WHERE NERO'S DOMUS AUREA (GOLDEN PALACE) ONCE STOOD.

我が名はネロ②

ビンゴ・コミックス

BINGO COMICS

第9話～第12話　コミックビンゴ99年2月号～5月号掲載
第13話～第15話　描きおろし

1999年9月25日　第1刷発行
定価はカバーに表示してあります

著　者　安彦良和
©YOSHIKAZU YASUHIKO 1999
装　丁　及川和弘(NPC)
発行人　堀江礼一
発行所　株式会社 文藝春秋
〒102-8008　東京都千代田区紀尾井町3-23
電話03-3265-1211

印刷・製本　凸版印刷株式会社

万一落丁・乱丁の場合は送料当方負担でお取替えいたします
小社営業部宛お送り下さい
Printed in Japan

ISBN4-16-090057-7